



THE SUNDAY TIMES

30

years of Clarkson



MAGAZINE

How many bathrooms have you got?

HOME



Starmer to ban new drilling in the North Sea

Labour vows to make UK a ‘clean energy superpower’

Caroline Wheeler and Ben Spencer

Sir Keir Starmer will announce plans to block all new North Sea oil and gas developments and borrow only for green investment as part of a transformation of Britain into a “clean energy superpower”.

The Labour leader is expected to set out his net zero energy policy when he begins his latest “national mission” in Scotland next month. The pledge on North Sea oil and gas licences signals a seismic shift in decades of energy policy.

It will be one of Starmer’s five key promises to the electorate and opens up a dividing line with the Conservative Party on a critical issue before next year’s general election. Rishi Sunak has backed further oil and gas exploration as part of his energy security strategy.

Starmer will also announce that a Labour government would only borrow to invest in green enterprises, another dramatic departure from previous policies. The Labour source said: “We’ll set out our fiscal plans in full at the election, showing how we will invest in jobs and industries of the future while meeting our fiscal rules.”

The party expects the plan to create up to half a million jobs in the renewables industry, including at least 50,000 in Scotland. The move is expected to offset developments in the dwindling North Sea

oil and gas fields that directly employ more than 20,000 workers and provide an estimated further 200,000 jobs onshore.

Under the “green prosperity” plan, Labour is aiming to double onshore wind, triple solar and more than quadruple offshore wind power. The party has committed to creating a publicly owned renewable energy company whose aim is to achieve a zero-carbon power system by 2030. However, Starmer’s decision to turn off the taps in the North Sea is not expected to come without challenges because it could force the UK to place more reliance on energy imported from countries such as Russia and Saudi Arabia.

NEWMAN’S VIEW



The UK meets about 45 per cent of its gas needs from domestic energy generation, reducing its dependence on overseas vendors with higher emissions. Despite the continued rise in renewables, however, 85 per cent of homes rely on gas boilers for heat and 42 per cent of electricity comes from gas.

A Labour source said: “We are against the granting of new licences for oil and gas in the North Sea. They will do nothing to cut bills as the Tories have acknowledged. They undermine our energy security, and would drive a coach and horses through our climate targets. But Labour would continue to use existing oil and gas wells over the coming decades and manage them sustainably as we transform the UK into a clean energy superpower.”

Labour’s treatment of the North Sea will create a dividing line not only with the Tories, but also the Scottish National Party, which has stopped short of calling for a halt to North Sea oil and gas licences.

The move is thought to be an attempt to attract votes away from the SNP, which has been under pressure since Nicola Sturgeon stepped down. The route to Downing Street for Labour is seen as having to go through Scotland and the party is hopeful of making significant gains.

In its draft energy strategy, published in January, the SNP

Continued on page 2 →

WILLOUGHBY ‘I’M HURT BY SCHOFIELD DECEIT’



Holly Willoughby, the presenter of ITV’s This Morning, has spoken of the personal impact of realising that her co-presenter on the show, Phillip Schofield, had “lied” to her face when denying his affair with a young male colleague during his marriage Full story, page 3

Eco-King turns down the heat at palace pool

Roya Nikkiah Royal Editor

He is known to enjoy living and working in teeth-chatteringly cold conditions that others can find challenging.

Now, some of the King’s staff, who have long enjoyed the perk of using the swimming pool at Buckingham Palace, are also feeling the chill. King Charles has turned down the thermostat.

A source said: “A few people

using the pool have noticed that the temperature of the water has dropped, and it is quite a bit cooler than it used to be. They have been told the King has had the heating turned down.”

It is understood that Charles, 74, a lifelong environmentalist renowned for his green campaigning, is keen to continue reducing the royal household’s energy use, an issue he has prioritised in recent years. He has installed solar panels

on the roof at his London home, Clarence House, and at his country residence in Gloucestershire, Highgrove, and uses bath and waste water to water plants and flowerbeds.

Staff often observe the King checking that no lights remain on unnecessarily. In a BBC documentary to mark Charles’s 70th birthday in 2018, Prince Harry said: “He’s a stickler for turning lights off.”

The King has also been known to quiz his staff on lighting fires. A royal source said: “He would want to have a very good reason for why a fire was being lit, and would want to know why you wanted to heat a room beyond room temperature, whatever the weather outside. He would see it as wasteful.”

Writing in The Sunday Times last year, after Charles acceded to the throne, Julian Payne, his

Continued on page 3 →

Victims of \$10bn narco state created by Assad seek help on Harley Street

Syria is making billions from the amphetamine it produces in industrial quantities. Now wealthy addicts from the Middle East are seeking treatment in Britain

Louise Callaghan Middle East Correspondent

About three years ago, Rameez Ali, an addiction therapist from Birmingham, started noticing something extremely unusual: streams of messages from patients, often upper-middle-class young men from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, complaining of depression, anxiety and insomnia.

They had come to London, or

been sent by their families, to study. But they were all harbouring a secret. They were addicted to Captagon: an amphetamine that is being produced in industrial quantities by the regime of the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, and spread across the Middle East in a multibillion-dollar trade that has turned Syria into a narco state.

Despite colossal seizures of pills hidden in pomegranates and milk cartons, in ports from Sicily to

Dubai, despite airstrikes on production facilities and shootouts with smugglers by Jordanian forces, the trade in Captagon is exploding. Before 2011 it barely registered internationally. Now after 12 years of war, the value of the illicit trade, estimated at about \$10 billion (£8.1 billion), far outstrips any of Syria’s legitimate exports.

Captagon has also become a valuable bargaining chip for Assad

in his quest to end his pariah status after presiding over the destruction of his country and the death and displacement of millions of his people.

In the Gulf, the drug is taken by migrant labourers struggling to stay awake for a 20-hour shift and by bored rich kids at parties in compounds.

These are the ones who come to the UK, complaining of insomnia and trying to get prescriptions for

sedatives. The problem is so severe that Ali, the addiction therapist, is now working with Sophia Khalique, a Harley Street GP, to set up a new service in London dedicated to treating Middle Eastern clients addicted to Captagon.

Given the large numbers of people who are coming to him, said Ali – who estimates that one in three of the patients referred to him is addicted to the drug – then the numbers of users in their home

countries is likely far higher. He suspects that it could be “a hidden epidemic”.

In countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, where alcohol is

Continued on page 4 →



WHAT ARE YOU TUNING INTO?

The past year has seen a spate of interest rate increases to quell rampant inflation. A corollary of that is growing concerns about growth as well as the banking turmoil that has caused anxiety. In these fraught times, it’s important to cut out the noise, and fine tune your investment choices. Our wide range of fixed income funds may be able to provide the bandwidth to match your wavelength. We call it the value of active minds. To find out more about our fixed income capabilities, visit jupiteram.com/inflation



JUPITER
ASSET MANAGEMENT

Capital is at risk. This advert is for informational purposes only and is not investment advice. We recommend you discuss any investment decisions with a financial adviser, particularly if you are unsure whether an investment is suitable. Jupiter is unable to provide investment advice. Issued by Jupiter Asset Management Limited, The Zig Zag Building, 70 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6SQ, authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. JAM000192-001-0523

Four-hour airport queues after passport e-gates fail

Holiday passengers hit as it emerges Home Office was warned 18 months ago of system’s weaknesses

Nicholas Hellen Transport Editor

Queues of up to four hours built up for air passengers arriving in Britain yesterday when passport e-gates failed nationwide.

The technical problems began on Friday evening and lasted for almost 24 hours until they were fixed at about 6pm yesterday, with passengers suffering at all airports that use e-gates, including Heathrow, Manchester and Gatwick.

The Home Office was officially warned 18 months ago about weaknesses in monitoring faults at the passport e-gates.

Yesterday, officials declined to say what exactly had gone wrong with the system. A spokesman told the BBC it was “too sensitive” to expand on.

Passengers had to have their passport checked by hand instead of going through the automatic gates, which allow them to scan their own documents and use facial recognition.

Travellers encountered other problems on a busy weekend when a bank holiday coincided with the half-term school holidays. On Thursday and Friday, more than 20,000 passengers had their plans disrupted when British Airways cancelled 175 flights out of Heathrow because of problems with online check-in.

People crossing the Channel from Dover were delayed for 90 minutes when the French passport system failed yesterday morning, but the problems were fixed by lunchtime.

It has emerged that the Home Office was warned in January last year of weaknesses in the system for reporting faults. A 104-page report to parliament by David Neal, the independent chief inspector of borders and immigration, found that gate incident logs used for recording faults and incidents were “poorly maintained” and said his inspectors were unclear “how useful these manual records are to the Home Office or how they use them to identify patterns or trends with gate faults”.

He formally recommended that the Home Office should “implement standardised methods for reporting faults and incidents at the gates ... ensuring that trends can be identified, categorised and analysed”.

Vision-Box, based in Portugal, has held the e-gates contract since 2012, and is contracted until April next year. It has



Passengers wait at Heathrow terminal 5 to have their passports checked by hand while a line of e-gates stand empty



“
The technical problems began on Friday evening and lasted for almost 24 hours

been paid £50 million since 2016, according to an analysis of Home Office procurement notices by Tussell, a firm that specialises in public sector contracts.

The inspectors reported that communication between the Home Office and Vision-Box “could be better on both sides”. They also reported that there was a general view at the Home Office that Vision-Box was “not great at supporting their products” and “spread themselves thinly”. However, according to the inspection report, Vision-Box “said they had been informed ‘anecdotally’ that ‘the UK could not run the border without our service’”. Vision-Box did not respond to requests for comment.

There are about 270 e-gates at 15 airports and Eurostar terminals. They can be used by British and EU citizens over the age of 12, as well as people from Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland and the US.

Those aged between 12 and 17 must be accompanied by an adult. E-passport gates were introduced in 2008 and more than 260 million passengers had used them by July 2020.

The Home Office said it was aware of a “technical nationwide border system issue affecting arrivals into the UK” and that by 6pm all e-gates were working.

Rory Boland, travel editor at Which?, said: “It’s completely unacceptable that chaotic scenes at UK airports and ports have become such a common occurrence at peak travel times. It’s especially concerning this year, when travellers have been asked to pay extortionate amounts for flights.”

‘Costly’ new NHS staff plan on hold

Caroline Wheeler, Shaun Lintern and Harry Yorke

Rishi Sunak and Jeremy Hunt are to hold talks this week on the ballooning cost of plans to increase the numbers of doctors and nurses.

An NHS workforce plan, already postponed from last year, had been due to be published on Tuesday but has been delayed again because of concern about the “significant investment” required.

A senior NHS source said: “They can’t agree the financial commitment. It was all set to go this week and now the PM wants to run through it in detail.” The figures are believed to run into the tens of billions of pounds.

Treasury officials are said to be continuing to push NHS chiefs to include lower estimates of how many extra doctors and nurses are needed.

Chronic staff shortages have become the biggest problem for the NHS, which has a vacancy rate of 10 per cent, or 133,000 posts.

Last week it was revealed that some A&E departments in England were spending more than 80 per cent of their pay budget on agency doctors to fill vacant shifts, compared with last year when the figure was 19 per cent, according to NHS data analysed by the Royal College of Emergency Medicine (RCEM).

Health chiefs have promised a long-term staffing strategy and the NHS wants to double medical school and nurse training places.

The plan is also expected to include an expansion of nurse apprenticeships, which has already been greeted with caution by nursing leaders.

Dr Adrian Boyle, president of the RCEM, has warned that staff shortages put patients at greater risk. He said: “We still have lots and lots of nasty corridor care, and [also] people waiting more than 12 hours.”

Starmmer to ban new drilling in North Sea

→ Continued from page 1

proposed making the “fastest possible” transition away from oil and gas production” and said it had a “presumption against new exploration for oil and gas”. Energy licences are under Westminster’s control.

The North Sea Transition Authority (NSTA) has just held a new licensing round for oil and gas exploration projects, which attracted more than 100 bids. Two significant oil fields – Cambo and Jackdaw – have been given licences.

This is despite calls from the International Energy Agency for no more fossil fuel projects to keep net zero targets in check, and the emergence of a new alliance of countries at the Cop27

climate change conference in Glasgow last year committed to banning domestic oil and gas drilling.

Last week Graham Stuart, the minister for climate and net zero, said the government was committed to new oil and gas licences in the North Sea but “would never” approve anything incompatible with net zero greenhouse gas emissions and global warming limited to 1.5C.

Scientists and campaigners are worried that the government will grant permission for the Norwegian company Equinor to develop the Rosebank oil and gas field in the North Atlantic, which would produce 500 million barrels of oil if it goes ahead.

Analysis by the campaign group Uplift has shown that the emissions simply from producing oil from the field would exceed the entire share of the UK’s carbon budget earmarked for oil and gas production from 2028.

Humza Yousaf, the Scottish first minister, said this month that there was a “moral imperative” to move away from fossil fuels – but stopped short of calling for a

halt to Rosebank. Without new licences being approved, experts predict that domestic oil and gas production could fall by as much as 15 per cent per year by the turn of the decade. If so, output in ten years would be about 80 per cent lower than it is now.

Overall, gas production has seen a fall of about 7 per cent over the past five years and it would have been much steeper without investments in new fields. Oil production fell by 7 per cent last year, and is 26 per cent lower than in 2018. Since exploration began, 46.4 billion barrels of oil and gas have been extracted from the UK continental shelf.

According to the latest estimates, there were four billion barrels of “proven and probable” oil and gas remaining at the end of 2021. The UK uses about a billion barrels a year, though much of the North Sea output is exported for use in plastics and other manufacturing. A further 6.1 billion barrels are thought to remain in licensed fields waiting for full approval.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says emissions from existing fossil fuel infrastructure are already enough to heat the world beyond 1.5C above pre-industrial levels. Breaching this target is likely to lead to irreversible environmental damage.

But the Climate Change Committee, which advises the government, is less clear about the impact of continuing to pursue oil reserves in the North Sea. In advice last year, it said there were “emissions advantages” to producing fossil fuels domestically, rather than importing supplies from abroad, although it said it was not clear if domestic production would displace imports because so much is sent overseas.

Dave Whitehouse, chief executive of Offshore Energies UK, said: “People wouldn’t forgive anyone who shut down Britain’s oil and gas industry and replaced it with imports ... Labour’s approach risks sending the wrong signals.”

Editorial, page 24

DESIGN AWARDS FOR THE SUNDAY TIMES

The Sunday Times has won 13 prizes at the 44th edition of the prestigious Society for News Design awards

Based in New York, the SND awards are contested by a broad spread of top international titles, including The New York Times, Die Zeit, the South China Morning Post and the Los Angeles Times

Editors’ Code of Practice Committee independent lay member

For further information and job description please visit www.ipsoc.co.uk/aboutus/vacancies or email recruitment@ipsoc.co.uk

The Editors’ Code of Practice Committee, the body responsible for writing and reviewing the Editors’ Code, the set of standards IPSO enforces, is recruiting a new independent lay panel member.

They will join IPSO’s Chair, Chief Executive and two other independent lay members to represent the public on the Committee, alongside 10 senior serving editors. They need not have any specialist knowledge,

but should have a particular interest in press standards. £25000 per half day. The committee usually meets twice a year. The closing date for this vacancy is June 16.

Subscribe to trusted, insightful journalism. Choose from a range of print and digital options thetimes.co.uk/subscribe

TIMES
RADIO

12.45pm The award-winning film-maker **Sahra Mani** on her new documentary *Bread and Roses*, produced in collaboration with the actress **Jennifer Lawrence**
1pm The writer and director **David Koepp** on his new novel, *Aurora*

1.15pm The *Trigger Happy* TV star, **Dom Joly**
4.45pm **Dr Adrian Boyle**, president of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine
6.45pm **Dhivya Kate Chetty**, the documentary film-maker behind *When Tina Turner Came to Britain*

20% off

outdoor plants

Spring. Nailed

You can do it

Shop in store today

Offer ends 5 June

*Offer excludes: bulbs, turf and any products sold and shipped by verified sellers on diy.com. Subject to availability. Ends 5 June. See in store or diy.com

Duchess faces wrath of investors who lost £19m in theatre funding firm

Glen Keogh

The Duchess of York and Lord Grade of Yarmouth face being sued by liquidators seeking to recoup up to £19 million lost by their failed media investment company.

They were directors of Gate Ventures, a publicly listed company that invested in start-up businesses and theatre shows, including West End productions of *Sunset Boulevard* and *42nd Street*.

Grade, who is chairman of the communications regulator Ofcom, became a director in 2015 and served as chairman from 2017 until it was placed into administration by a High Court judge in 2020. Sarah Ferguson was a director between 2017 and 2019.

In total, the company raised about £24 million,

mainly from small-time investors in the Far East who were “wowed” by the presence of Grade, 80, and the duchess, 63, during roadshows to drum up business in places including Macau and Hong Kong.

However, many of its investments and loans were made to companies linked to the directors. Millions were also squandered on poor investments and administrative costs, including an expense account of almost £5 million run up by the former chairman Dr Johnny Hon, a businessman based in Hong Kong.

Founded in early 2015, Gate Ventures’ share price initially soared before it was delisted from the London junior market, the Alternative Investment Market (Aim), under a cloud of suspicion.

Hon, 51, who stepped down as chairman in December 2017, spent about £2.9 million of the company’s money on hospitality, travel and other expenses, including meetings with celebrities such as the

Hollywood stars Al Pacino, Robert De Niro and Julia Roberts. He also met Prince Harry and the footballers Lionel Messi and Paul Pogba, regularly paying thousands of pounds to charities associated with the

celebrities to facilitate each meeting. A progress report released this month, by the joint liquidators from Quantuma and Moore Kingston Smith appointed to recoup money for creditors, said 24

claims had been made, totalling £5.1 million. The liquidators will try to recoup the vast majority of the £19 million lost.

The report said: “The joint liquidators have undertaken a significant amount of work in relation to investigations relating to investments made into the company, investments made by the company and the conduct of the directors in managing the affairs of the company. The joint liquidators have identified a number of claims which they expect to issue as a result of those investigations.”

Hon’s spending in 2017 and 2018 occurred while Grade and the duchess were directors, and continued for a brief period while he was chairman. Last week, Hon

said all his spending was signed off by the board.

Six other people – as well as the duchess, Grade and Hon – were directors of the company during the period liquidators are examining. All could be held liable for money sought on behalf of creditors and shareholders. It was founded by Geoff Morrow, a former songwriter for Elvis Presley and Barry Manilow. One director was Michael Linnit, a theatre producer, who ran the Gradelinnit Company with Grade, and produced *42nd Street*, which lost more than £5 million in 2019.

Gate Ventures made “unexplained” loans of more than £500,000 to the duchess, including £232,000 to Ginger & Moss, a tea and dinnerware company she founded. This loan has not

been repaid and it is understood a recent offer of repayment was so low that it was rejected. The duchess is said to hope that the Ginger & Moss loan will be settled in coming weeks.

Last week Hon defended his role at the company, insisting that he was just “a fundraiser and networking person”. He said his spending was similar to a large bank or public company paying politicians or celebrities to speak at events.

Gate was placed into administration on the application of Zheng Yongxiong, a Chinese investor, who said he was unable to recoup a £2.5 million loan.

Grade, who was appointed chairman of Ofcom for a four-year term in April last year, was contacted for comment.



Willoughby’s words leave ITV with more questions to answer

Allegations over Phillip Schofield’s affair with a junior colleague had been dismissed by the channel as ‘malicious gossip’

Glen Keogh, Jamie Nimmo, David Collins and Katie Tarrant

Holly Willoughby has described the hurt that Phillip Schofield caused when he lied to her face by denying an affair with a much younger colleague.

Willoughby, 42, said she asked her *This Morning* co-presenter, 61, about rumours of his relationship with a young male runner on the programme “when reports first surfaced”. This is thought to have been in late 2019 or early 2020. In February 2020, he came out as gay.

She said on Instagram: “It’s taken time to process yesterday’s news. When reports of this relationship first surfaced, I asked Phil directly if this was true and was told it was not. It’s been very hurtful to now find out that this was a lie. Holly.”

Willoughby’s comments effectively end any prospect of Schofield resuming his television career. They came 24 hours after Schofield released a statement via the Daily Mail confirming an affair with the young man which began in around 2016 when he was 20 and Schofield was in his mid 50s.

Schofield and the man, who The Sunday Times is not naming, met when he was a teenager and looking to break into acting and the television industry. He is said to have “idolised” Schofield and was invited to the *This Morning* studios by his mentor shortly after they were introduced by a mutual friend.

Throughout, Schofield was married to his wife, Stephanie, with whom he has two grown-up daughters.

ITV executives are now facing pressure to disclose what they knew of Schofield’s affair with the junior colleague after insiders suggested it was an “open secret” among staff.

Dan Wootton, the journalist who previously worked on ITV daytime as a showbiz reporter, said he told the broadcaster about Schofield’s affair in 2019 but they dismissed it as “malicious gossip”. He said: “There was an open revolt amongst ITV Daytime talent and producers that Schofield’s young male colleague and lover, who was 34 years his junior, had been moved from *This Morning* after their relationship soured.”

He said he told ITV they had to investigate but it was made clear “the broadcaster had no intention of doing so”.

At the time, Wootton was the executive editor of The Sun. He said: “An ITV spokeswoman ended up dismissing my 2019 story, saying: ‘It’s deeply disappointing and unfair for Phillip to be the target of this sort of malicious gossip.’



“Phillip is a much respected broadcaster and colleague and this is absolutely not a description of *This Morning* that we recognise.”

Before Willoughby and Wootton’s comments yesterday, the broadcaster had attempted to draw a line under the furore by releasing a statement detailing an investigation into rumours of the relationship in early 2020. This was not taken any further when Schofield and the man “categorically and repeatedly” denied the rumours, which were spreading among staff members and online.

An ITV spokesperson said that other staff were spoken to but the investigation “did not find any evidence of a relationship beyond hearsay and rumour.”

ITV said it was “deeply disappointed by the admissions of deceit.”

Senior television figures have criticised ITV for its handling of the issue.

Eamonn Holmes, a fellow former *This*

Phillip Schofield came out as gay to his *This Morning* co-presenters Ruth Langsford, left, Holly Willoughby and Eamonn Holmes on air in 2020

“**Bosses knew what sort of man he was and didn’t act**

Morning presenter, alleged that “members of ITV management knew what sort of man he was and never once took action to prevent him controlling or taking advantage of his position.”

He said he and his wife, Ruth Langsford, had been “lied to”. “What transpired took us for fools,” he added.

Prof Jonathan Shalit, chair of the Inter-Talent talent management agency, which represents Shirley Ballas and Steven Bartlett, among others, said: “Many in the industry, ITV and at YMU knew there was an inappropriate relationship with a young man half his age.”

Schofield has also been dropped by his management company, YMU. Mary Bekhait, YMU group chief executive, said: “This week, we have learnt important new information about our client Phillip Schofield. These facts contradicted what Phillip had previously told YMU, as well as the external advisers

we had brought in to support him.” In his statement on Friday, Schofield confirmed he met the man “when he was a teenager and [I] was asked to help him get into television”, adding: “That relationship was unwise, but not illegal.”

He said: “I did have a consensual on-off relationship with a younger male colleague at *This Morning*,” he said in a statement. “Contrary to speculation, whilst I met the man when he was a teenager and was asked to help him to get into television, it was only after he started to work on the show that it became more than just a friendship. That relationship was unwise, but not illegal. It is now over.”

He added: “I am painfully conscious that I have lied to my employers at ITV, to my colleagues and friends, to my agents, to the media and therefore the public and most importantly of all to my family. I am so very, very sorry, as I am for having been unfaithful to my wife.”

Climate-conscious King sets palace pool to ‘bracing’

→ Continued from page 1

former communications secretary, recalled how “The King ... always has the windows wide open. A meeting at Birkhall, his home in the Highlands, in the middle of winter was not for the faint-hearted. I can remember more than one occasion when I thought I might have actually got frostbite while trying to

write with a hand I could no longer feel.”

In turning down the heat at the palace pool, Charles will also have an eye on the palace’s publicly funded energy bills, which are monitored by a network of more than 60 smart meters on the royal estate. Last year, the utilities bill for the royal palaces, which is paid for by the taxpayer via the sovereign

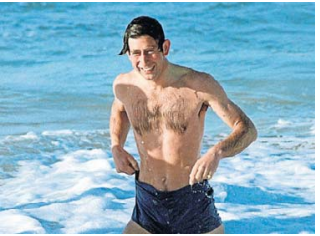
grant, was £3.2 million. The King is also known to be keen to achieve net zero emissions in the royal household, before the government’s target date of 2050.

A source, who knows Charles well, said: “He probably thinks the whole thing is environmentally unsound, because the palace pool water has chemicals and has to be heated. It doesn’t fit with his exercise regime or his world view.”

Charles enjoys swimming, but is said to prefer the sea to pools. He occasionally uses the pool at Highgrove, but it is not thought he uses the one at Buckingham Palace. In 2019, during a tour of the Caribbean, he was photographed swimming in the sea in Barbados, prompting widespread commentary on his toned physique, which he maintains



Charles, then Prince of Wales, at Bondi Beach in Sydney in 1981. The pool at Buckingham Palace, circled, can be used by staff when no royals are swimming



with a daily exercise regime.

The pool at Buckingham Palace was commissioned by George VI in 1938, after Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret became keen swimmers as young children. It was completed in 1939, shortly before they moved to Windsor during the Second World War. The palace was hit during the bombing of London in 1940 and a bomb fell close to the pool, which was subsequently rebuilt.

The King learnt to swim there, as did his siblings. Diana, Princess of Wales also used the pool regularly, and Princes William and Harry are thought to have learnt to swim there. Prince George, Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis also swam there before the Waleses moved to Windsor.

Senior members of the royal household are

permitted to use the pool, but must check in advance if a member of the royal family is planning to swim, to avoid a clash.

In his book *Not in Front of the Corgis: Secrets of Life behind the Royal Curtains*, the royal author Brian Hoey wrote: “The rule is if a staff member is swimming and one of the royals appears, they have to get out, unless invited to remain, which often happens. If, when the staff member turns up, a royal is already in the pool, the servant, and this includes senior members such as the private secretary or keeper of the privy purse, will not attempt to join them.”

No public photographs exist of the pool’s interior, and the conservatory which houses it is clad in darkened glass, meaning no visitors to the gardens can see inside.

The pool is rectangular and, according to a former royal aide, “basic”. The former aide said: “The water was warm but it is definitely not glamorous. There are no loungers. It is not like a spa where you’d want to linger. You’re in and out.”

While Charles no longer uses the pool, as a child he enjoyed swimming and sailing model boats there. One of his classmates, Richard Alston, previously told the Daily Mail: “We all made small model boats in woodwork, and Charles invited us to the swimming pool at Buckingham Palace to sail them. As we went to launch ours, he brought out his replica of the Britannia. Life was not fair at times.”

Buckingham Palace declined to comment.

Call to clear out bosses of ‘rotten to the core’ Post Office after racism shame

An accounting scandal victim says it is still more concerned with rescuing its reputation than with allowing justice

Hugo Daniel and Rebecca Thomson

The Post Office was described last night as “rotten to the core” after internal documents showed it had used racist terms to classify postmasters it wrongly investigated for fraud.

The organisation told its investigators to racially classify potential suspects, including “negroid types”, a racist term from the colonial era of the 1800s.

Between 1999 and 2015 more than 700 postmasters, owners and managers of local post office branches, were wrongly prosecuted for theft and false accounting

when in fact the missing money was caused by bugs in its flawed £1 billion Horizon IT system.

Adeep Sethi’s parents, Baljit, 70, and Anjana, used to run two Post Office branches near Romford in Essex and fell victim to the Horizon system which left a £17,000 hole in the branches’ accounts. The Post Office asked the couple to cover the shortfall out of their own pocket and they were forced to enter an IVA, similar to a bankruptcy, after the Post Office suspended them.

Sethi said: “The Post Office has been rotten to the core for a number of years, lying, acting with no integrity. This isn’t a one-off. It’s an institution that’s more concerned with its own reputation than the victims. They’re not worried about the victims. Sixty people have died without compensation.”

The internal documents were released to the campaigner Eleanor Shaikh after a freedom of information request. They

include guidance requiring investigators to give sub-postmasters under suspicion a number according to their racial background, which was published between 2008 and 2011.

Categories include “dark skinned European types”, “white skinned European types”, “Indian/Pakistani types”, “Chinese/Japanese types” and “Arabian/Egyptian types”. Sub-groups are also listed under each category including: “ie West Indian, Nigerian, African, Caribbean, etc” which appears under “negroid types” and “Malaya, Japanese, Filipino, Burmese, Siamese, Mongolia, etc” under “Chinese/Japanese types”.

John Hutton was business secretary for the first part of 2008 followed by Lord Mandelson in 2008-09 and then Sir Vince Cable. The parliamentary under-secretary for employment relations and postal affairs, a post established in 2009, was Lord Young of Norwood Green in 2009, followed by Sir Ed Davey from 2010



Postmasters’ convictions were overturned but many still await compensation

to 2012. Alan Cook was the boss of the Post Office between 2006 and 2010.

Kevan Jones, the MP for North Durham who has long campaigned for compensation for the postmasters, said: “This is pretty disgusting. There has been a lack of humanity throughout.

“The very people who oversaw this rotten culture are not being held to account. [They] have still got their honours given to them by the government while victims still fight for compensation. They’ve all overseen this and they just seem to have floated above it all even

when more scandals come out. This must be the high point of a long line of shocking behaviour at the Post Office, and those in charge seem to have got away with it for the moment. With some of them there’s got to be a day of reckoning.”

The Post Office said it had “begun an investigation” into how the “codes” came to be used. A public inquiry is also running into the Horizon scandal.

In March the inquiry heard how Asian postmasters who called a helpline about the Horizon system were labelled fraudsters. Amandeep Singh, who worked as a

helpline operator, said staff mocked postmasters while they were on mute. In a statement to the inquiry, Singh said: “Shouts across the [help centre] floor could be heard saying, ‘I have another Patel scamming again’.”

Parmod Kalia, 64, ran the Orpington post office in Kent for 11 years before a hole of £22,000 appeared in his accounts. He paid the money to the Post Office, but it prosecuted him for theft anyway and he was jailed for six months. His conviction was overturned in 2021, but the Post Office has refused to pay him compensation. “There’s a sense of a lack of humanity because the Post Office ... from top to bottom think they’re higher than god and have all these subpostmasters at their mercy,” he said.

Former postmaster and campaigner Alan Bates, who has fought for decades to expose the scandal, said: “I always used to call the managers and the management teams thugs in suits. I’ve always thought of them as that. The board and all the senior people need to go and it needs to be rebuilt from the ground up – it’s dead simple.”

The Post Office described the guidance as a “historic document”. It said it did not tolerate racism “in any shape or form” and condemned the “abhorrent” language. “We fully support investigations into Post Office’s past wrongdoings and believe the Horizon IT Inquiry will help ensure today’s Post Office has the confidence of its postmasters,” it added.

Nick Wallis, Comment, page 25

Assad’s narco state victims on Harley Street

→ Continued from page 1

banned, Captagon is a cheap and easy way to get high. Pills cost anywhere between a dollar and 15 dollars.

Some users don’t even believe they are taking a drug, or realise how addictive it can be. Captagon is also seen by some religious Muslims, who would never drink alcohol or smoke hashish, as a medicine, or a performance-enhancing aid, rather than a narcotic.

“The Quran doesn’t say you can’t take tablets to improve function,” said Khalique in her airy clinic. “There’s such a physical dependence on these drugs that then gets out of hand.”

The pills at first improve concentration, suppress the appetite and give energy and confidence. Schoolgirls studying for exams, exhausted lorry drivers, hungry families in Syria and Lebanon, wealthy university students – all have been known to take it.

“The tablets are very cheap and they give a lot of energy,” said a Nepalese migrant labourer who had worked in the UAE and returned home after falling sick. “You can work for a long time without ... tiring.”

But after a while, heavy usage of the drug can lead to insomnia, anxiety and mood swings as the body goes through withdrawal. Patients, said Khalique and Ali, are often desperate for help, but don’t want their families to find out that they’ve been using drugs. “The majority are middle-class male high-performers,” Ali said. “The families aren’t aware of the issues. It’s very tough.”

Captagon, the brand name for a pill made with the chemical compound fenethylamine – part of the same family as amphetamines – was invented by West German scientists in the 1960s to treat attention deficit disorder. It was made illegal in most countries in 1986, after it was recognised as an addictive drug, and production subsequently tailed off.

Remaining stocks, however – say analysts documenting the trade – were smuggled out of production centres in eastern Europe to the Middle East by Turkish and Balkan traders. Soon Hezbollah, the militant group, spied a business opportunity, and began overseeing the production and sale of amphetamines on a relatively small scale, concentrating their efforts in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley.

In 2011, Assad launched a bloody crackdown on peaceful protesters that plunged the country into civil war. The economy was destroyed, cities were in ruins and western sanctions targeted him and his closest circle, who run the country like a mafia state.

He needed money, fast, and found it in Captagon. Soon, regime agents were setting up factories and taking over businesses to turn them into amphetamine

production facilities.

Working with allies such as Hezbollah and other armed groups, the regime and its associates – particularly Maher al-Assad, the president’s brother, who is head of the fourth armoured division – run a multibillion-dollar industry that produces and distributes amphetamines across the world, although the drug still has almost no street presence in the UK.

Captagon brings Assad not only money – estimates of the size of the trade range from a few billion dollars to \$58 billion – but also political power. “Captagon is one of the primary alternative revenue streams for the Syrian regime and regime-aligned actors,” said Caroline Rose of the Washington-based New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, who leads a special research project into the Captagon trade. It is hard to overstate the scale of production. Last

“The majority are middle class males. The families aren’t aware

year alone, according to the Newlines Institute, at least 370 million pills were seized throughout the region.

Western nations have launched a sweeping response to the flood of drugs as part of their quest to starve the Assad regime of revenue. Last year, President Joe Biden signed into law an act requiring US agencies to target the Captagon trade.

In March, the UK and US announced sanctions on a number of Syrians and Lebanese, who they claimed were deeply involved in making and selling Captagon.

Yet Assad, far from bowing under the weight of the counter-trafficking measures, airstrikes and sanctions, is using his ability to flood the Middle East with cheap amphetamines as a bargaining chip in his attempt to be brought back in from the cold. This month, he appeared at the Arab League summit in Jeddah, alongside leaders of nations who for years backed the rebels trying to overthrow him.

“The Captagon issue will be one of the negotiating tools that Assad will use with Arab countries moving forward to try to make financial deals in the region,” said Lina Khatib, director of the Soas Middle East Institute in London. “Assad has contributed to creating the Captagon problem, and is now instrumentalising that problem to present himself as the solution,” Khatib said.



Our guarantee to you

Find a better value pair of comparable hearing aids on the high street and get double the difference back

You’re better off with Specsavers



Best Value Guarantee Price Promise: We'll refund you double the price difference if you find a better value pair of comparable hearing aids on the high street. Only available to individuals with a written quotation (published prices are not accepted) for a pair of comparable hearing aids and extras from a competitor's UK retail store obtained within the previous 60 days. Excludes quotations obtained from online only competitors. For full terms and conditions, please visit [specsavers.co.uk/hearing](https://www.specsavers.co.uk/hearing)



Laura’s shoes are sitting by the back door. They’ll never be laced up again

From the scan that revealed the tumour to their last moments together, *Nicola Nuttall* remembers the daughter who moved so many

The blood donor nurse prepared me for the sharp scratch I barely felt. “Do you feel okay?” she asked. “My daughter died this morning,” I replied. “Why on earth are you here?” “Because it’s what Laura would have expected of me,” I told her. It’s been six days since my daughter, Laura, died at 23. I am still wading through thousands of messages of condolence, astonished that her short life has touched so many others, but the truth is that the reality of it is yet to sink in for me.

Laura was born in Burnley, one long dark night at the end of the last century. She was late but perfect and I counted my blessings as I counted her tiny toes. She was a bright, independent girl, quieter than her noisy little sister Gracie but determined and ambitious. She was a taekwondo black belt by 14, a voracious reader, a girl who had a ten-year life plan before she had even left primary school.

Laura was passionate about politics. She found herself an internship and saved up to spend a summer working on the midterm elections in Chicago, then left us for university in London, with her three As and a car packed with boxes.

Six weeks later, she called me to say that a trip to the optician’s had ended with an urgent referral to Moorfields Eye Hospital. The ophthalmologist identified pressure behind Laura’s eyes but after a cursory examination she was sent home with a routine referral to a neurologist.

It wouldn’t be anything serious, we reassured ourselves. But the next day, she suffered the worst headache of her life and was horribly sick. Gracie and I took the last train to London, and the Tube to Stratford. We found her curled into a tight ball in the dark in the halls of residence, and I knew with a cold dread that something serious was wrong.

We sat on hard plastic hospital chairs, Laura clutching a cardboard sick bowl. I hoped that I wasn’t wasting everyone’s time and in the same breath hoped I was.

The young doctor asked Laura to follow a pen-torch without moving her head, to lift her arms with eyes closed and push hard against her extended hand. A CT scan was requested.

Afterwards the doctor pulled back the thin blue privacy curtain and crouched down. I hoped I was misreading the look on her face. “I’m so sorry but it looks like Laura has a brain tumour, probably two.”

“Plot twist,” said Laura dryly, in the understatement of the century.

I rang Mark, my husband, from the hospital’s bad news room (low seats, fake flowers, tissues). He drove down that



Nicola with Laura — “bright, independent, determined and ambitious”. Top, Laura in hospital, fulfilling some of her bucket-list wishes, and graduating from Manchester University last summer

morning and we packed up Laura’s room. Tears streamed down my cheeks as I stripped her bed and boxed up belongings, devastated to think that Laura’s dream was over before it had even begun.

Laura’s age and the aggressive growth of the tumours suggested that the lesions in her brain had metastasised from another primary cancer and so every centimetre of her body was examined, as if she had become a crime scene.

“Plot twist,” said Laura dryly, when the doctor gave her the diagnosis

What should we hope for, we wondered; some primary tumour in a dark corner of her body that had found its way to her brain or one that had popped up in the brain like a mushroom in dark compost? It was like choosing between being eaten by a tiger or by a shark.

On the morning Laura was scheduled for surgery, we found her unresponsive in bed, then she suffered a seizure, rendering her unconscious. The surgeon warned that, if and when Laura came round, she might not be the same girl. Those were the longest hours of my life.

Laura was sitting up in bed 24 hours later, eating mint choc chip ice cream, heavily bandaged and the owner of two spectacular black eyes but still Laura. The largest tumour had been debulked and 50 neat stitches were healing underneath a sterile dressing. She bounced back within days. We were elated. It felt like we had won the battle, but in reality, this was only an initial skirmish in a long and difficult war. A week later, our enemy was named – glioblastoma; the most aggressive malignant brain tumour and it had spread tentacles across the topography of Laura’s brain.

“Like a cancer?” she asked.

“Yes, exactly like a cancer,” the surgeon replied.

She thought for a moment. “Can I go back to university this year, or do I need

to wait till next year?” She asked.

There was a horribly uncomfortable silence. “I’m sorry, Laura, but you won’t be going back to university.” We slipped out to talk to the surgeon, not wanting Laura to hear her prognosis. The answer was 12 months with treatment and three months without.

My legs refused to hold me up and my howls echoed down the corridor. How on earth could that be true, or fair? How could I only have a year left with my daughter?

I learnt that brain tumours were the biggest cancer killer of children and adults under 40, yet received only 2 per cent of cancer funding and, although there were innovations in Germany and the US, treatment in the UK hadn’t changed in decades.

To break up the monotony of chemo and radiotherapy, we made a bucket list and filled the good days with adventures while the bad days saw her confined to bed, exhausted and sick. We went on safari in South Africa, watched *Saturday Night Live* in New York, met Michelle Obama, and fished with Bob Mortimer and Paul Whitehouse. Some things came from Laura’s initial list, some were offered to us by generous strangers, and I became a fixer of the highest level.

Laura began her studies again, at Manchester University in September 2019, and was determined to live in halls. The tumour grew back and was cut away in April 2021, then again that December. But she proved the doctors wrong and kept on living. She graduated in last summer’s heatwave with a 2:1 in PPE and a standing ovation from the hall. It was a joyous day full of happiness and family pride. She was almost four years post-diagnosis.

But we always knew our time with her was finite. In October last year Laura had her fourth craniotomy but within two weeks the tumour had grown back.

We fought to stay positive but as the outlook got worse, I needed an outlet to express my growing fear. I started tweeting the unvarnished truth as @shit-scaredmum and the number of people following the highs and increasingly the lows of Laura’s story grew to 30,000. When Laura took a turn for the worse in November and we decided to bring Christmas forward to make sure she

would be there, we were inundated with cards and gifts from followers around the world. We didn’t talk much about death, but Laura told us that when the time came, she wanted to die at home. So we nursed her through those final weeks when she could no longer walk, then lost her speech and ability to swallow. We watched her disappear before our eyes until even the hand squeeze was too much for her. It was harder than I could have imagined, and I will be forever haunted by her face in those final days.

She died on Monday with her dad, sister, and mum by her side. I miss her terribly, the child she was, the teenager we knew and the adult she was becoming. I miss seeing her walk into the room chewing on a carrot, I miss seeing her sitting at her desk with headphones on and a tube of Pringles, watching *The Office*. Her shoes are by the back door and will never be laced up again, her unfinished bottle of Coke is still in the fridge. I cannot believe that I will never see her face again. I probably haven’t even begun to process the fact, kidding myself that she’s still away at university.

For now, it is easier to keep busy. The tweet announcing Laura’s death was seen by almost ten million people and I haven’t begun to answer the condolence messages that have flooded in. But I know that the worst of grief is to come.

Laura was passionate about the search for a cure and wanted her brain to be donated for research. If a legacy is “planting seeds in a garden you never get to see”, then who knows what hers will be.

Last year she was asked to write a letter of advice to year 6 children. She told them to “Be kind, be brave, be silly, be honest, be happy, be you.” And that is what I will try to do.

Bonham Carter turns to fudge and the Charleston on Celebration Day

Josh Glancy

Death may be inevitable, inescapable and universal, but, as Helena Bonham Carter puts it, it is also “a f***er”.

All of us carry around grief for someone we have lost, a brother, a mother, or a friend, yet many struggle to find a way to commemorate those they have lost.

This is why a group of celebrities and public figures, including Bonham Carter, have come together to promote Celebration Day. Now in its second year, the movement sets aside one Sunday a year – today – to celebrate our dead.

“I really believe that we carry the people we’ve loved in us,” says Bonham Carter, 57. “Once somebody is dead, we tend not to celebrate them, but actually we should celebrate them all the more.”

Today, she will be remembering her father, Raymond, a banker who died in 2004. He always gave up chocolate for Lent but had a habit of eating fudge as a replacement. She’ll be eating fudge in his honour.

She will also be remembering her grandmother, Hélène Fould-Springer, an artist. Known as “Bubbles” because of her effervescence, Fould-Springer loved to dance the Charleston. So Bonham

Carter will be twisting her heels and flapping for Bubbles, who died in 1997.

“This is a way for me to introduce her to my children,” the actor says. “It’s the handing-on of their legacy.”

The brainchild of a group of friends including the publicist Sir Alan Parker and the psychotherapist Julia Samuel, Celebration Day is an attempt to give everyone an opportunity to acknowledge and appreciate their dead. Many are being encouraged by the National Trust to plant a tree for their loved ones.

There is perhaps a danger

that this all sounds a bit luvvie. A bit touchy-feely. Perhaps even rather un-British. Yet Bonham Carter believes that we are becoming a society and a country capable of talking about and expressing our feelings properly, which is no bad thing.

“Some people might say, ‘Oh my God, we’re becoming a nation of wimps and emotional incontinents’,” she says. “But I think one of the hardest things in life is loneliness, which this can help alleviate. Our forebears could have had much easier lives if they’d talked about these things.”

Many religions and cultures have formal celebrations of the dead. In Mexico, November 2 is always the Día de los Muertos, the Day of the Dead, an explosion of colour and celebration in honour of the departed. In the Jewish religion, it is traditional to burn a *yahrzeit* candle and say prayers for the deceased on the anniversary of their death. Christianity honours its fallen martyrs on All Hallows’ Day.

Yet Britain today, a mostly post-religious society, has few such collective rituals. Perhaps it is time we introduced some new, non-religious institutions to help us navigate life’s most difficult emotional currents.

Bonham Carter holds on to the idea that we are but a portion of all those we have ever loved. And so when they are gone, a part of us goes with them. “I miss the conversations,” she says. “I miss the person I was when I was with them.”

There is no right way to celebrate the dead, she says. The important thing is to remember them with joy as well as grief. “You could cook their favourite meal or play their favourite music,” she adds. “You could even dress up as them. The important thing is to keep them present and alive inside of us. Otherwise you relegate them to silence.”



The actress plans to remember her father Raymond, who had a sweet tooth, and her dancing grandmother Bubbles



20% off garden furniture & BBQs*

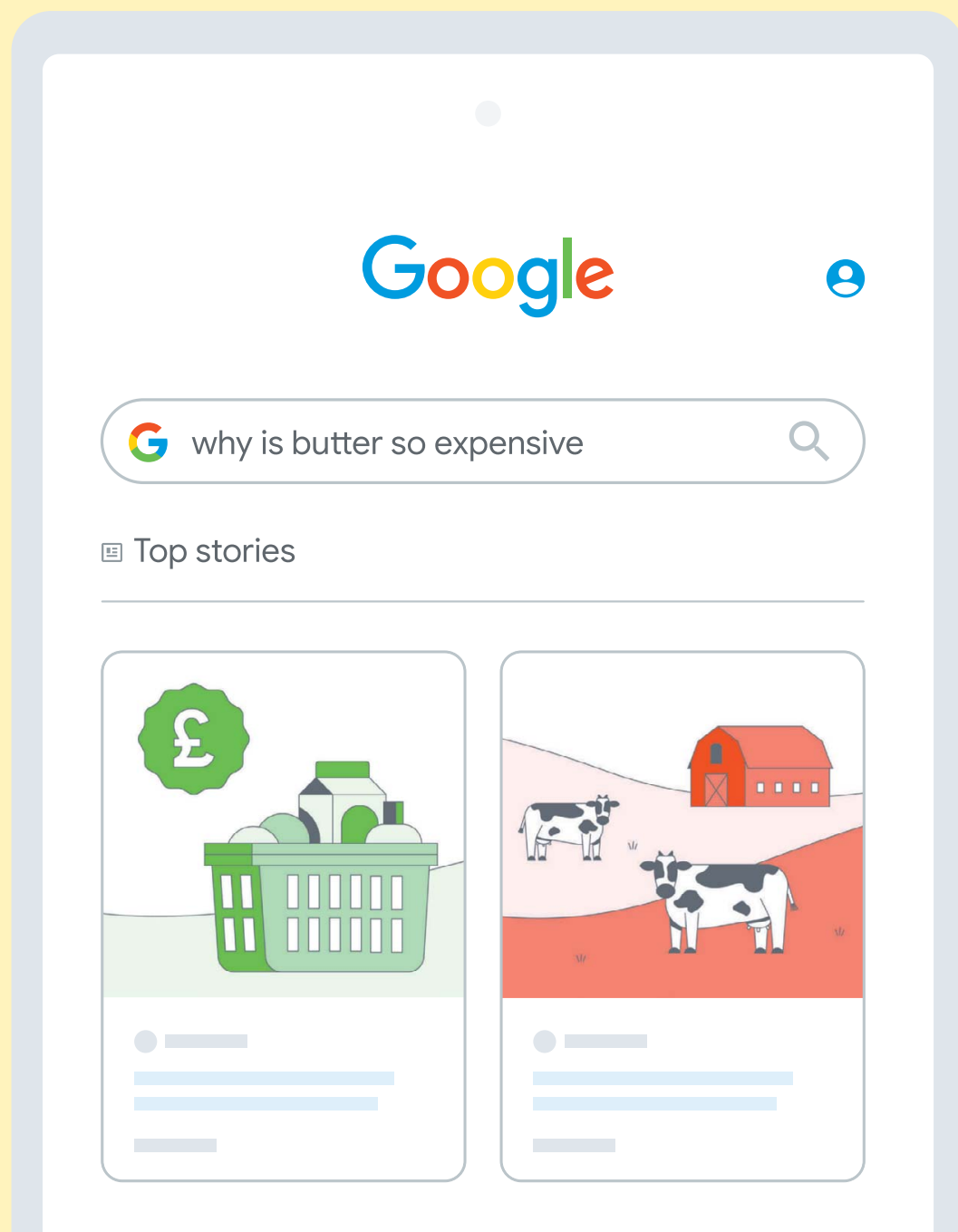
Offer ends 5 June
Shop in store, via the app, or at diy.com



You can do it

*Excludes firepits & chimineas, hot tubs, saunas and products sold and shipped by verified sellers on diy.com. Prices may vary in B&Q Local stores. Subject to availability. Ends 5 June. See diy.com

Find the facts



UK searches for “why is butter so expensive” have increased by over 500% in the past year.* From stories about the weekly shop to reports on the economy, Google helps millions of people access reliable news they can depend on.

Learn more at g.co/supportingnews/uk



*550% increase in the past 12 months, correct at 20 March 2023.

Touts charging £300 to beat driving test queue

Online sellers are using bots to Hoover up exam slots and reselling them to learners desperate to avoid a six-month wait

Nicholas Hellen and Venetia Menzies

Touts have snapped up a quarter of all driving test bookings and are charging learners hundreds of pounds to avoid queues of up to 24 weeks.

A backlog of more than 500,000 tests caused by the pandemic and examiner strikes has hit waiting times for candidates, who are resorting to desperate measures. Online resellers are circumventing official channels run by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) by using bots to buy test slots before learners can book them.

Numerous accounts on social media claim to sell driving test slots for earlier dates than those available on the official booking system, charging learners a marked-up price to secure them. Prices for a test slot range from £160 to £250 for a “priority booking” service, and touts

are advertising on Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok and Telegram.

Candidates are paying up to £300 more than the official rate for their practical test, while those who stick with the DVSA system face long waits. Sources said that 100 test centres were fully booked for the next 24 weeks.

The DVSA has warned driving instructors not to abuse their privileges in the test booking system to make extra profit, and has revoked the rights of some instructors who have done so.

Test slots are released 24 weeks in advance and are often booked in minutes. Driving instructors and schools have privileged booking rights, and are entitled to swap test dates between candidates, ostensibly allowing the system to run more efficiently because candidates take the test only when ready. However, instructors are swapping 200,000 tests a year, up five-fold since the pandemic.

Touts could previously register in the DVSA system as a driving school, without being challenged for verification, and gain privileged booking rights, enabling them to sell and swap slots.

It is understood that some touts use bots to find slots as soon as they are released and book them. Some use a can-

didate’s provisional driving licence number and theory test number to book a test, but these may be offered willingly by the learners. Others may be using the same provisional driving licence number to make many applications.

Last week, the DVSA told instructors that a fraudulent “phishing” email was in



‘I was distracted by trying to book a driving test’

“The resellers are able to stay a step ahead

circulation, posing as an official request from the DVSA for personal data that could be used to create accounts booking test slots. It has told motorists never to share images of driving licences or vehicle documents because of the fraud risk.

Dozens of websites offer to find learners earlier booking slots for a fee. It costs £62 to book a standard weekday test via the government website, or £75 for one in the evening, at the weekend or on a bank holiday, but the websites ask for additional fees of up to £300.

Social media accounts list dozens of dates they claim you can book, with captions such as “get booked in on same day ... why wait 6+ months for a date?”

Fraudsters have set up dozens of social media accounts that purport to offer further services including “guaranteed pass”, “penalty point removal” and “ban removal”. Some TikTok accounts feature videos purporting to show the inside of the official DVSA booking system.

The DVSA said it was confident that its system had not been compromised and that the videos were not genuine.

Ed Voller, 55, a former maths teacher who has worked as a driving instructor in Ipswich for 20 years, said the town’s test centre had become a target for the resel-

lers because it had a 60 per cent pass rate and was an easily accessible location.

He said residents were being squeezed out. “These websites are encouraging youngsters to book a test centre many miles from home. Somebody in Ipswich can’t get a test because somebody from Sheffield has got [a slot here], and somebody from Blackpool has taken their slot in Sheffield.”

The DVSA conducted 1.67 million driving tests last year and, according to internal polling, 26.6 per cent of learners said they had used a non-DVSA app to book their test, which suggests that 444,000 tests were booked elsewhere.

Carly Brookfield, chief executive of the Driving Instructors Association, said: “The few who may be tempted to collaborate with, or market such services, risk being barred from the booking system and potentially having their instructor licence removed for not being a ‘fit and proper’ person ... However, we do need to be realistic about the fact that, in an environment where pupils may have to wait over six months for a test, desperate measures will be taken by some.”

Loveday Ryder, the DVSA chief executive, said: “We have zero tolerance for those who exploit learners.”

Hidden pain behind rite-of-passage film that took Cannes by storm

Her experience of assault as a teenager spurred Molly Manning Walker to shine a spotlight on Generation Z and sex

Peter Conradi Europe Editor

Talk about making a show-stopping entrance: when Molly Manning Walker was named the winner of one of the most sought-after prizes at the Cannes film festival on Friday, the British director was nowhere to be seen – her flight from Italy had been delayed and she was stuck in a taxi from the airport.

As the elegantly clad audience fidgeted in their seats, John C Reilly, the American actor and occasional singer who headed the jury, crooned an a cappella version of Nat King Cole’s *Pretend* to fill the uncomfortable gap.

A few minutes later, a diminutive figure with cropped blonde hair, wearing a neon-green T-shirt, Adidas shorts and trainers, burst through the back door, ran through the hall and sprang on to the stage. Struggling to catch her breath, Manning Walker, 29, hugged Reilly and held aloft the trophy awarded to her for *How to Have Sex*, which won the Un Certain Regard (a certain point of view) category for young talent. In an impromptu speech she declared the rite-of-passage film as “the most magical experience of my entire life”.

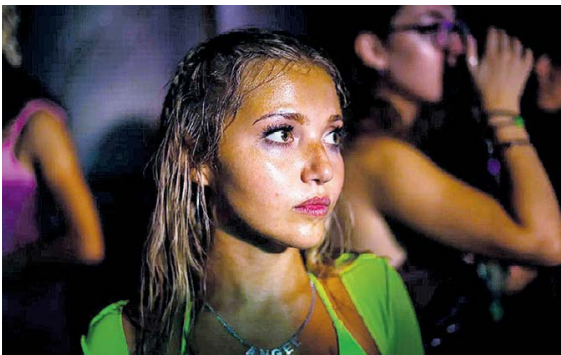
She said last night: “We finished making the film a week before it premiered so this has been a total whirlwind. Yesterday was truly out of this world.

“What an absolute honour to win the Un Certain Regard prize. I was in Rome at 6.30pm and then I was on stage at 8.30pm picking it up. The response to the film this week has been really special.”

It was a suitably unorthodox appearance for the Londoner, whose debut feature has proved one of the surprise hits of this year’s Cannes festival, which concluded last night with the award of the Palme d’Or to *Anatomy of a Fall*.

How to Have Sex, which she both wrote and directed, follows three female teenagers celebrating the end of their GCSEs with what they declare will be “the best holiday ever!” at Malia, a resort in Crete. Their aim is to drink, dance and have sex, but one of the three, Tara, played by Mia McKenna-Bruce, is a virgin and unsure of how far she wants to go – raising issues of peer pressure and consent.

The plot came to Manning Walker when she was at a wedding reminiscing with school friends about an equally rau-



Mia McKenna-Bruce in *How to Have Sex*, about a drink-fuelled teenage holiday. Its director, Molly Manning Walker, ran on stage in sports gear, having been held up en route to the ceremony



cous holiday they had all been on once in Magaluf, Mallorca. “I was talking about a blowjob that had happened on stage at a club, half convinced I must have imagined it, but everyone remembered it the same way,” she recalled. “I hadn’t realised how much sexual influence it had had on my life, but also on everyone I spoke to at that wedding.”

The director also drew on her experience of being assaulted while out drinking in London as a 16-year-old. Part of why she made the film was “to talk about that and talk about how it doesn’t get talked about”, she told the Associated Press (AP) this week. “It can suck the air out of a room but it shouldn’t. If so many people have experienced it, we should talk about it openly.”

Manning Walker grew up in the film world. Her mother, Lesley Manning, is an editor turned director, who has made many programmes and films for television, most notably *Ghostwatch*, a pseudo-documentary about the paranormal, broadcast on BBC1 on Halloween in 1992. It attracted a massive audience but also prompted a record 30,000 complaints from traumatised viewers wrongly convinced the events in it were real, prompting the BBC to ban it from being shown again for at least ten years.

Her father is a writer and animator, and her elder brother, Charlie, is a lighting technician and the frontman of Chubby and the Gang, a punk band whose videos have been directed by Manning Walker.

“When it’s good, our family house can feel like a studio producing work,” she said in an interview in 2019. “[But] when we were growing up my parents went through a really hard time where no one was earning money, which I think has scared me for life into earning cash.”

Though initially toying with the idea of being a war photographer – inspired in part by her soldier grandfather who

filmed experiences on Super 8 – she instead followed family tradition by studying cinematography at the National Film and Television School, in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire. She has since established a name working largely in TV and commercials. This January she won the World Cinema Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance festival in Utah for her cinematography on *Scrapper*, another British film.

The themes tackled in *How to Have Sex* were first raised in *Good Thanks, You?*, a 13-minute film she made charting the aftermath of a rape and the way it is discussed – in particular the misunderstanding of the nature of consent.

She then wrote a 50-page script, which won the Next Step Prize at Cannes in 2021 and served as a basis for *How to Have Sex*. Before she started shooting, Manning Walker held workshops around Britain with teenagers – separated into males and females – who were asked to read parts of the script and share feedback. “They would read the first assault scene and be like, ‘oh, this isn’t assault’, and at one point a girl even said, ‘girls need to take responsibility, and not get so drunk,’” she said. “So at the end, we were even more sure this was an important film to make.”

Manning Walker originally wanted to set the film in Magaluf, but opted in the end for Malia, where they shot for six weeks last September and October. To recreate the energy of high season, they needed to recruit 300

Manning Walker, whose directorial debut earned an eight-minute standing ovation, hugs the film’s young star

extras aged 16 to 21 every day for two weeks (about 2,000 in all), many of them wearing T-shirts with lurid slogans to make them look British. After scouting 30 or 40 hotels to find the right location, they came across one with a penis-shaped swimming pool.

Manning Walker learnt barely two months ago that her film had been accepted for Cannes, leaving her scrambling to complete it on time. “Every exec was like: ‘But what are you wearing?’” she said in the AP interview. She replied: “I’m finishing the film!”

As things turned out, it was good she had not spent too long worrying about her dress. A foretaste of her triumph came when her film was premiered a week earlier on the first Friday of the festival and was greeted by an eight-minute standing ovation.

In a rave review, *Variety* called it a “fresh, head-turning debut” that “lays out the minefield of sexual education and consent for a post-#MeToo generation, with a precision to its ambiguities that will draw gasps from its characters’ contemporaries and elders alike”.

@Peter_Conradi

Return of Hollywood party king, page 19



Badenoch promises equalities chief will not be ‘hounded out’

Caroline Wheeler and Hugo Daniel

Kemi Badenoch, the equalities minister, has given her backing to the chairwoman of Britain’s human rights watchdog and privately promised she will not allow her to be “hounded” out of her job.

Baroness Falkner of Margravine, the chairwoman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), is at the centre of a vicious internal row after her own officials filed a dossier of 40 complaints about her alleging “bullying” and “harassment”. An investigation was

launched last week but has since been suspended following a backlash from 54 peers amid concerns that Falkner is the victim of a witch-hunt by staff opposed to her stance on trans rights.

The complaint was made after she advised the government that it was worth considering redefining sex as “biological sex” in the Equality Act, which the EHRC said would make offers of single-sex services easier.

Badenoch has privately expressed her support for Falkner but cannot be seen to be publicly undermining the EHRC’s internal processes. A source close to Badenoch

said: “Kemi has huge admiration for Baroness Falkner, who she has found to be a woman of incredible courage and tenacity. As secretary of state with responsibility for equalities, she will wait on the EHRC to conclude its investigations, but has made it clear privately that she will not allow people navigating incredibly contentious, complex and indeed novel issues to be hounded from office for doing their job.”

Allies of Falkner say the complaints against her are led by those who are opposed to her stance on trans rights. This is disputed by some staff,



Baroness Falkner, the chairwoman of the EHRC, has been accused of bullying by some staff

who have described her as “rude” and say there has been an exodus of workers unhappy about the way the organisation had become politicised.

Critics of Falkner compiled a “dossier” of evidence, including claims of bullying and harassment, that was leaked to Channel 4 News.

It also alleged that staff have a “lack of trust” in the board’s impartiality and that some decisions made are “not in the public interest”.

Concerns were also raised that the Liberal Democrat peer was appointed to the job by Liz Truss, amid claims she had an agenda to make the EHRC more pliant.

The EHRC’s board is likely to launch a leak investigation amid questions about the role of its chief executive, Marcial Boo, in the row.

Hadley Freeman, page 24

MPs ‘claimed fines on expenses’

Maanya Sachdeva

A new investigation has revealed that Tory MPs claimed taxpayers’ money as travel expenses to pay for driving fines.

According to The Independent, Amanda Solloway, minister for energy consumers and affordability, the select committee chairman Simon Hoare, and former Tory vice-chairman Bim Afolami wrongly claimed fixed penalty notices issued by Transport for London on expenses between 2019 and 2020.

Labour’s shadow Commons leader, Thangam Debbonaire, urged Rishi Sunak to “clamp down on the rule-breakers in his party”.

Debbonaire said: “While

Rishi Sunak’s MPs break the rules and try to make the taxpayer pick up the bill, working people are left struggling to cope with the soaring Tory cost of living crisis.”

The report comes days after Sunak was urged to investigate claims that Suella Braverman, the home secretary, had asked her staff to help her to arrange a private speed awareness course.

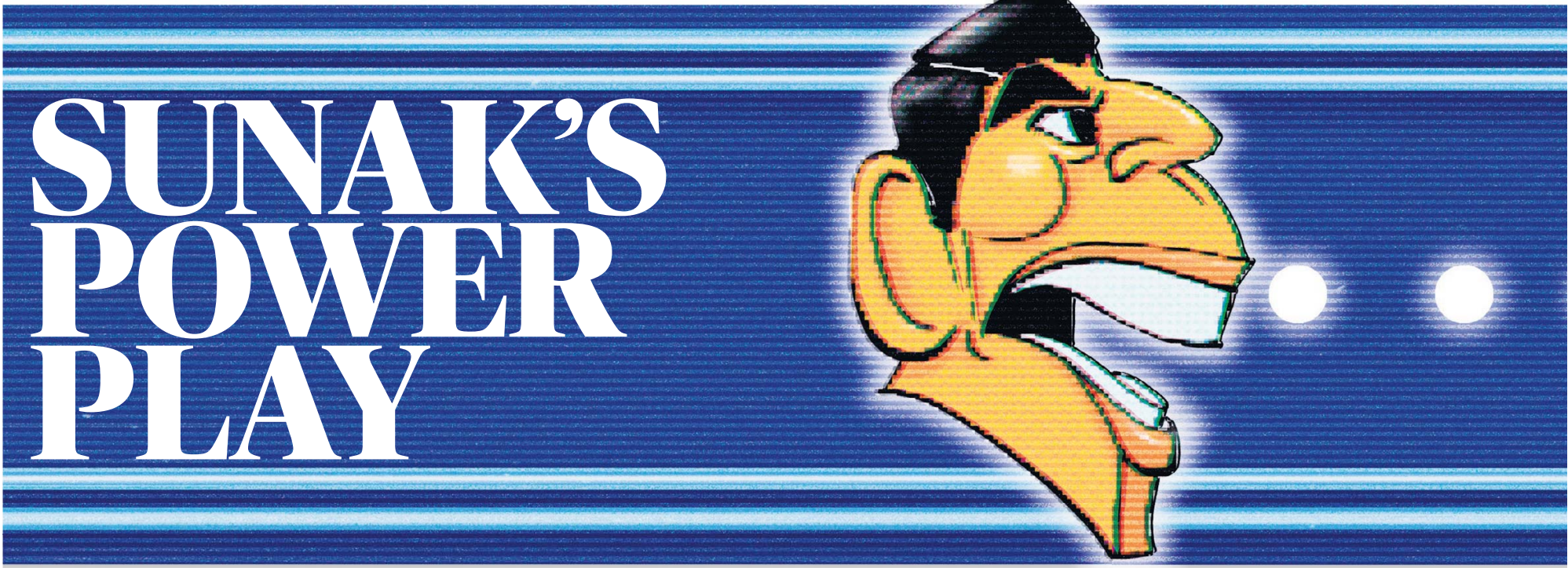
After consulting his ethics adviser Sir Laurie Magnus, Sunak told Braverman that he had decided a formal investigation was not necessary and that her conduct had not breached the ministerial code.

Solloway, who has previously served under

Braverman, reportedly claimed an £80 notice that was issued to her while she was driving in London in July 2020.

The investigation into Tory MPs’ travel expenses showed that the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) had approved over £1,000 in penalty charges between 2019 and 2022. This included a claim by Dave Doogan, an SNP MP. IPSA said it would ask the MPs to repay the money, and that the rules would be “reiterated”.

Both Solloway and Afolami claimed the expenses were erroneously submitted and that they had repaid the amounts. Offices for the other MPs have not yet offered comment.





Tim Shipman

Chief Political Commentator

The prime minister has fought back after being blamed for allowing the Tory right to be ‘gobbled up like Pac-Man’ by bitter civil servants. Now Team Johnson is pointing the finger at a different villain

The scene on the rooftop terrace of Carmelite House, the London home of the publishers Hachette, on Wednesday evening might have come from the book being launched at the party that night – *Whips*, a tale of political and sexual skulduggery in Westminster, by Cleo Watson.

There was not a cloud in the sky but the Tory tribes circulated warily around each other in the late spring sunshine as the political storm clouds gathered once more for their party.

Watson worked in Downing Street for both Theresa May and Boris Johnson, helped to run Vote Leave and has close friends at the top of Rishi Sunak’s No 10. All were present. Surveying the scene, a Tory peer with similarly split loyalties said: “Half the people here are deciding whether to talk to each other; the others are wondering how they manage to avoid each other.”

The main subject of discussion that night (along with the identity of the sex-mad female cabinet minister who appears, horizontal, in the first chapter of the book) was the renewed psychodrama between Johnson and Sunak. That was prompted when 16 entries from Johnson’s official diaries were passed to the police, amid claims they revealed gatherings that could have breached Covid guidance.

Earlier that day, Sunak and Sir Laurie Magnus, his independent adviser on

ministers’ interests, had cleared Suella Braverman, the home secretary, of wrongdoing after The Sunday Times revealed last weekend that she had asked civil servants to arrange a private speed awareness course after she was caught over the limit.

Dominic Raab, who resigned from the cabinet after being found to have bullied staff, announced he would not fight the next election, sparking claims that he feared he would not hold his Esher and Walton seat in once true-blue Surrey.

On Thursday morning, official immigration figures showed that net migration last year was more than 600,000, double what it was before Brexit. This may well have a damaging impact with voters but in Westminster the clear and present danger to Sunak seemed to be coming from Johnson.

His allies attacked “the blob” of senior civil servants in the Cabinet Office. One Brexiteer backbencher said the right was “being gobbled up like we are in Pac-Man”. Those closest to Johnson pointed the finger of blame at Oliver Dowden and Jeremy Quin, the senior ministers in the Cabinet Office.

The full timeline of what unfolded – which has been misrepresented in several important regards – threatens this weekend to reignite the civil war.

On Tuesday May 16 lawyers for the government legal service, who were helping Johnson to put together his statement for the Covid inquiry, came across entries from his official Downing Street appointments diary, which suggested there had been gatherings in Chequers and No 10 that may have breached the Covid guidelines.

None of these concerned periods of lockdown, but all covered periods of restrictions. Some were at Chequers but a majority were at Downing Street.

Johnson’s statement was due to be submitted by tomorrow. He is due to give oral evidence in public in either November or December.

The entries were brought to the attention of Alex Chisholm, the permanent secretary at the Cabinet Office, in his role as “accounting officer”, since the taxpayer was footing Johnson’s legal bill. Senior Cabinet Office officials say he was duty-bound to pass the material to the police or run the risk of being accused of breaching “his obligations under the civil service code of conduct”.

The diary entries were sent to Thames Valley police, who are responsible for Chequers, and the Met, who guard Downing Street, on May 18. The following day, at around 3pm, Darren Tierney, the head of propriety and ethics in the Cabinet Office, called Johnson’s office to inform him.

When Johnson found out what had happened he was in the United States, a visit that culminated in dinner with Donald Trump last Thursday. He and his team were first confused, then apoplectic, then called in new lawyers.

“Boris is absolutely furious,” said one of those in touch with him last week. “He was completely flabbergasted and he suspects foul play. He has been spitting feathers. He feels his reputation has been unfairly trashed.”

Johnson’s aides accuse discredited former aides – code for Dominic Cummings – of peddling “totally fabricated” claims about “pool parties” at Chequers, stories that have not been published after his team pointed out that every arrival at the prime minister’s country retreat is recorded in and out by a police checkpoint.

On Friday the Commons privileges committee, which was set to rule in the next two weeks on whether Johnson had lied to MPs, wrote to his lawyers saying: “The government has told us: ‘As part of their work preparing Boris Johnson’s witness statement for the Covid inquiry (due to be filed on May 29), the counsel team supporting Mr Johnson identified a number of diary entries as potentially problematic. These entries are based on an assessment by the government legal department as to events/activities which could reasonably be considered to constitute breaches of Covid regulations.’”

This was seized on by Team Boris as evidence that the government judged that Johnson had broken the rules; something the Cabinet Office continues to deny. Johnson called in a separate legal team working for Lord Pannick KC, who has been working for him on the privileges inquiry. By 9pm they had determined that every one of the gatherings in the diary entries was defensible.

A senior Cabinet Office official said this weekend that no “assessment” about the

Boris Johnson’s team want a “written apology” from Oliver Dowden, the deputy prime minister, and a leak inquiry



legal merits of the material was conducted by the government. “The only assessment we did was whether we should pass it to the police. It is a matter for the police to decide whether it constitutes grounds for an investigation. It would have been totally inappropriate to block it. It would also have been inappropriate to inform the former prime minister [Johnson] unless the police were happy for us to do so. On the Friday they said they were content to inform him as a courtesy.”

However, in another important regard, the Cabinet Office story has changed. It spent the week insisting that ministers played no role in the decisions. It remains the case that it says no minister was involved in sending the material to the police. But a figure in the Cabinet Office admitted that Quin, the paymaster general, had approved the decision to pass the material to MPs investigating whether Johnson had lied to the Commons.

The former prime minister is understood to believe that Dowden, Quin’s boss, “has form”, having helped to trigger his downfall by resigning as party chairman after two by-election defeats last year. One Johnson ally said: “If Quin was involved, Dowden would have known and if Dowden knew then Sunak would have been told.”

This weekend Johnson’s team demanded a “written apology” from Quin and Dowden and a leak inquiry into the original story in The Times on Tuesday; and said it was examining whether the Cabinet Office had broken the Data Protection Act.

A source close to Johnson, authorised to speak on his behalf, said: “This is a political stitch-up concocted in an attempt to smear Boris and prolong the privileges committee. At the heart of it is Oliver Dowden and Jeremy Quin. They must publicly apologise. The Cabinet Office must stop issuing statements which are based on falsehoods.”

In a second development that could cause problems for Sunak, it was also claimed last night that officials may have to assess the diaries of all ministers who were in their posts during the pandemic – a trawl that would cover the prime minister himself, who was chancellor, as well as Dowden, a move that might uncover further gatherings. “Dowden’s overreach really might accidentally shaft his boss,” one insider suggested.

A Cabinet Office close to Dowden said: “Ministers were not aware before the police were contacted. Clearly it would have been completely inappropriate for them to interfere with a police matter. The hope is that Boris’s team publish this information to back up their claim that these meetings were all within the rules so we can all move on.”

This is all a huge headache for Sunak, who has a plateful of political problems even without his attention-hogging predecessor on the warpath.

Johnson allies are named in Chequers diaries

Harry Yorke, Caroline Wheeler and Gabriel Pogrand

Boris Johnson’s meetings with the BBC chairman, his cousin and a Tory peer who paid for his flat refurbishment are among those referred to the police over concerns they may have broken Covid-19 rules.

The visits by Richard Sharp, Sam Blyth and Lord Brownlow are among about a dozen diary entries referred to two police forces last week by Cabinet Office officials.

A visit to Chequers in May 2021 by two friends of Carrie Johnson, which is thought to have resulted in an overnight stay, has also been flagged.

Last night a spokesman for Johnson said: “All events referred to the police were entirely lawful. This is based on advice from lawyers.”

Johnson has publicly dismissed claims of rule-breaking as “total nonsense”, denied the entries show he

was “mingling with friends”, and accused officials of “cherry-picking” from his diary.

The referral to the police was made after lawyers acting for Johnson before the Covid inquiry became concerned that his diary entries showed evidence of potential rule-breaking. One source said the entries contain the names of political associates, friends and family members.

The Cabinet Office has said it has made no assessment of whether the entries show rule-breaking, but that officials were obliged under the civil service code to refer them to the police.

On 2 May 2021, Sharp, the outgoing BBC chairman, visited Johnson at Chequers. At the time, indoor mixing between households was banned and social distancing rules applied.

He was joined by Blyth, Johnson’s distant cousin, who is one of Sharp’s friends. Sharp has stated publicly that

Blyth “drove me down [to Chequers]”.

The pair had months before discussed how Blyth could provide financial support to Johnson, with Blyth guaranteeing a loan of up to £800,000 to Johnson.

A spokesman for Sharp said the dinner had been outdoors and “Covid compliant”, as the rule of six applied at the time. They also said Sharp considered it a business meeting.

Blyth did not respond to

He accused officials of cherry picking from his notes

requests for comment, while a spokesman for Johnson said: “This event was entirely lawful.”

Another diary entry passed to the police refers to a visit to Chequers on May 7, 2021, by two friends of Carrie Johnson. According to sources, there is evidence of an overnight stay. At the time this was not allowed, unless the people visiting were part of a childcare or support bubble.

Johnson’s spokesman said: “This event was entirely lawful. It is factually incorrect to claim two individuals stayed overnight.”

Speaking to Sky News about the diary notes passed to the police, Johnson said: “None of them constitute a breach of the rules during Covid. They weren’t during lockdown. They were during other periods of the restrictions. None of them constitute a breach of the rules. None of them involve socialising. It is total nonsense.”

iPhone 13.

All-out standout.

Save £126.



Was £45

Now

£40.50

a month*

£40 upfront

300GB data



Scan to switch,

go in-store, or call

0800 033 8006 today.

BigValue

BigNetwork



*To get the advertised monthly price you must enter into a Device Plan (credit agreement) for 36 months with a monthly payment of £18.50 per month to finance the device, and a 24 month 300GB Airtime Plan which is £22 per month. From 2024, each April the Airtime Plan monthly charge will increase by up to December's CPI rate + 3.9%. Airtime Plan monthly charge includes £5 discount for paying by a recurring method such as direct debit. £126 saving = £72 (33pm) on 24m airtime plan and £54 off device cost versus previous pricing sold between 31/01/2023 and 11/05/2023. Credit is provided by Hutchison 3G UK Limited at 0% APR for the duration of the credit agreement. Credit is subject to status and a credit check and for 18+ only. If you miss a payment, you may be reported to a Credit Reference Agency, and you may find it more difficult or more expensive to obtain credit in the future. Hutchison 3G UK Limited is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority for Consumer Credit, registered office: 450 Longwater Avenue, Green Park, Reading, Berkshire, RG2 6GF. Terms apply.

ILLUSTRATION: RUSSEL HERNEMAN AND JAMES COWEN

“The last thing we want is another load of headlines about Boris and parties,” a senior aide to the prime minister said at the *Whips* book launch. “We want to move past all that.”

But for all the sound and fury, some at the party suggested grounds for optimism that the prime minister was riding out a week that could have been politically catastrophic. Simon Hart, the chief whip, found time to circulate with a glass of bubbles. He had told the PM earlier that day that not one MP had contacted either him or his team to complain about Johnson’s treatment. So far there is no sign that MPs want to agitate for another leadership contest.

Sunak attracted a £5 million donation to election coffers last week from Mohamed Mansour, an Egyptian-born billionaire who served under the former president Hosni Mubarak, the largest one-off donation for more than 20 years.

While the right is agitated about the civil service and Sunak over immigration and Brexit, the Braverman incident did not blow up in his face as it might have done. For all the talk that Magnus can now initiate his own inquiries, a civil servant suggested he did not try to do so in this case. “No one has codified when the independent adviser can step in. Does he write to the PM? No one knows. The cabinet secretary hasn’t said and Magnus doesn’t seem at all interested in having these powers,” the official said.

Had Sunak wished to ditch Braverman he might have been able to do so, but another aide to Sunak circulating in the sun on Wednesday night said: “She owes us a favour now.”

Braverman has even been heard to tell colleagues: “Half the problems we have with immigration at the moment are Boris’s fault” after he rejected headline plans to stop the boats in the government’s new bill to combat illegal migration two years ago.

Sunak is heading to Moldova on Thursday for a meeting of the European Political Community where he has put combating illegal migration on the agenda.

Brexit might have been another landmine. Members of the ERG group of hardline Brexiters were threatening mutiny over the government’s Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill: ministers have decided to ditch 800 laws made in Brussels, rather than the 4,000 euro-sceptics were demanding.

Sunak and his senior aides invited in key power players such as Bill Cash, listened to them and made several tweaks to the text of the bill. At 6.13pm on Wednesday not one Tory MP voted against the plans. Liam Booth-Smith, Sunak’s chief of staff, arrived at the book launch a while later, having stayed to watch the result. On seeing a friend he declared: “It sailed through.”

Watson gave her speech and none of the fissiparous factionalism descended into fisticuffs. The skies remained blue. For now. A giant blond cloud remains in Sunak’s sky.



Ageing millennials pose an ‘electoral timebomb’ for Tories – but they still want tax cuts

Tim Shipman and Katie Tarrant

The Tories are facing an “electoral timebomb” because millennial voters regard them as dishonest, incompetent and out of touch, according to a report.

Published this week by the Onward think tank, the report says they are the first generation that have not grown more conservative as they have grown older.

This is significant because millennials, which the report classes as aged 25 to 40, are already the most numerous single group in 51 per cent of parliamentary seats, outnumbering the older Generation X (aged 41-55) and baby boomers (56-70) and the younger Generation Z (aged 18-24). They outnumber Generation X in two thirds of seats. (The report’s age boundaries depart from most definitions, which make baby boomers aged about 59-77; Gen X 42-58; millennials 27-41; and Gen Z 10-26.)

“Millennials are the first demographic cohort not to become more right-wing as they age,” says the report, entitled Missing Millennials: why the Conservatives lost a generation, and how to win them back. “They are failing to acquire many of the attributes that have traditionally moved voters rightwards: home ownership, secure and stable employment, starting families. Without a stake in society, their political preferences are trending in the opposite direction. In fact, they are the first generation to become more left-wing as they age.”

The report is based on a poll of 8,000 people conducted by Focaldata in April. Onward also held four focus groups in March: in Stourbridge; Middlesbrough; and two in Basingstoke, one with parents and one with those who had no children.

Only 21 per cent of those aged between 25 and 40 said they would vote Conservative and a big majority, 62 per cent, said the Tories “deserve to lose the next election”. Forty-five per cent said they would back Labour.

The report warns that the Tory “brand lies in tatters” among millennials, 72 per cent of whom thought the country was “going in the wrong direction”. The top five attributes they associated with the Tories were all negative. Only 8 per cent thought the Conservatives “stand up for people like me” and 31 per cent thought they were “dishonest”. In the focus groups in Stourbridge and Basingstoke multiple voters described the Tories as “liars” and “incompetent”. One parent in Basingstoke said they stood for: “Keep the rich, rich and the poor, poor.”

By contrast, their top six views of Labour were positive, including “stands up for people like me”, “relatable” and “has a vision for the country”.

There are two glimmers of hope for the Tories. The first is that millennials like Rishi Sunak much more than his party. Among voters in their thirties, Sunak was 25 points more popular than the Conservative Party. Among the 25 to 30-year-olds he was

still 20 points higher. By the time voters hit 50 views of Sunak and the Tories in general were almost the same.

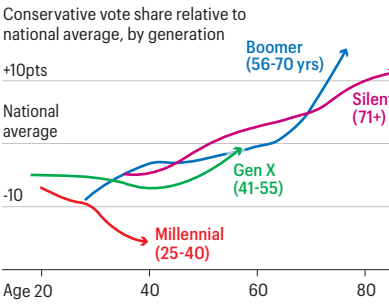
However in a warning for Sunak, whose MPs voted to ditch housing targets, the clearest issue where millennials differ from the general population is the shortage of affordable housing. Twenty-nine per cent said it was their top concern, compared with 21 per cent of all voters.

Josh Collins, 31, a porter at Cambridge University, is typical. He rents his brother’s spare room and despite earning £30,000, more than the national average income, regards owning a house as a pipe dream. Collins voted Conservative in 2015 but now says: “I don’t blame the Conservatives as such, but I don’t think they’ve helped the working-class man. The nation feels like it is pushing towards a boiling point and housing could be one of those tipping points.”

Sebastian Payne and Jim Blagden, the report’s authors, found a second reason for Tory optimism. They dubbed the group “shy capitalists” because while the millennial group identified with left-wing values they supported specific centre-right policies.

Asked if governments should prioritise equality or growth, millennials preferred equality. But asked if they should keep more of their money or pay more tax to support redistribution, they opted for lower taxes. “Reducing income tax and national insurance is the fourth most popular policy among millennials, but only seventh most popular for the general population,” Payne and Blagden write. They add: “If the Conservative Party is not constantly renewing its voting coalition and creating the next generation of Tory voters, it risks an electoral timebomb.”

Millennials are not becoming Conservatives as they age



Source: Focaldata, April 6-14, 6,065 GB sample size plus 2,002 25-40 year-old booster sample

Former PM set for No 10 crunch talks

Gabriel Poggrund and Tim Shipman

Boris Johnson is planning to speak to Rishi Sunak about his controversial resignation honours list, which includes the Tees Valley mayor Ben Houchen and three Conservative MPs.

The men are thought to have last spoken in person last year. Johnson is said not to have forgiven his then chancellor for resigning from his government.

Their representatives are in talks about scheduling a call in the coming days. Last week, Johnson’s allies attacked Sunak after the Cabinet Office referred the former prime minister to the police over possible Covid-19 rule breaches.

Johnson will treat any call as a formal conversation about the list of almost 50 names and the date of its

publication. Sunak, however, has insisted that peerages are left off the table.

According to sources, the vetting of Johnson’s list has finished after months of scrutiny, paving the way for its imminent publication.

One nominee they agree on is Houchen. Johnson unveiled Britain’s biggest freeport at Teesside, while Sunak’s constituency is on its doorstep.

The list could result in a series of damaging by-elections for the government. The Tory MPs on it – Nadine Dorries, Alok Sharma and Nigel Adams – have been told they cannot defer resigning until the next election. Downing Street will hope to avoid a pre-election test, although the MPs may have to resign immediately after any list is published.

Johnson and Downing Street declined to comment.

Speedy Swede shows how to conduct a Covid inquiry

Peter Conradi Europe Editor

If Baroness Hallett is looking for tips on how to run Britain’s Covid-19 inquiry, then she might look towards Sweden.

By the time the retired Court of Appeal judge was appointed to her role by Boris Johnson in December 2021, her Swedish counterpart, Mats Melin, had already produced two interim reports, scrutinising different aspects of his own country’s handling of the pandemic.

Working with commendable speed, Melin, 71, former head of the Swedish Supreme Administrative Court, produced his final report on schedule by February last year – a good four months before the terms of reference for Hallett had been agreed. “We certainly had a fairly tight schedule to comply with from the very beginning,” Melin told me last week. “It was quite a challenge to fulfil

our mission and evaluate an ongoing situation.”

The task was all the more complicated because, during much of their work, Sweden was still in the grip of the pandemic, forcing them to hold meetings online. The final report came out more than a month before Sweden scrapped travel protocols for visitors from outside the European Union and declared that the virus was “no longer [to] be classified as a threat to public health and a danger to society”.

There was plenty for the body, known as the Coronakommissionen, to investigate. While Britain and most other European countries swiftly imposed lockdowns, Sweden’s then left-leaning government initially followed a different course, relying on its citizens to voluntarily minimise their own contacts.

The policy was championed by Anders Tegnell, the controversial

chief epidemiologist. The country moved towards a more conventional approach as the pandemic went on, though kept its schools open.

The immediate consequence was that Sweden initially suffered a far higher death rate than its Nordic neighbours as the virus swept through retirement homes – though Tegnell’s supporters have seized on subsequent figures showing that the excess early mortality rates were offset by

lower-than-normal death rates thereafter.

Melin made clear in his hard-hitting report that he did not believe this justified the approach. “People in Norway and Denmark had another year to live. That is not something to be taken lightly,” he said. “Our main criticism is that in March 2020, the Swedish government should have taken much more stringent measures to try to slow down the spread of the pandemic to give itself time to reflect, to call on the resources we had and to be better prepared to deal with the pandemic.”

Compared with its British counterpart, the Swedish commission was a relatively modest affair. It had seven other members beside Melin, most of them academics, though there was also a vicar and a senior government official. They were assisted by a ten-member secretariat and took advice from three expert

groups of academics in epidemiology, crisis management and economics.

Melin said 100 or so people gave evidence behind closed doors, unlike in Britain. “There were no public events at all during the work of the commission,” he said. “You expect people to speak more openly and be more frank in their responses if it’s not immediately in the public arena, though all the results were published in the end.”

The speed with which the commission reported nevertheless brought difficulties. Melin said it meant it was too early to assess the long-term consequences, especially on mortality rates. It could therefore have made sense to issue a further report once the dust had settled – although there was no requirement to do so.

But speed also brought its advantages, according to Jonas Ludvigsson, a professor of clinical epidemiology at

the Karolinska Institute, a leading Swedish medical school, who has written and lectured about the report.

“It was good they reported back to the government fairly soon after or even during the pandemic because people felt the pandemic was still relevant and they were willing to make sacrifices to improve the system,” he said. “If the current British report is published, say, next year, it will probably make headlines for about two or three days, but then people will be busy with whether Manchester City will win the Premier League again, what’s happening in Ukraine and how much their gas costs.”

Has the early Swedish report achieved anything? Melin said there were a lot for policy makers to take from the findings “... to be better prepared for the next pandemic, which we certainly know will come, whether it’s next week or in 40 years.”

We certainly had a fairly tight schedule to comply with

After seven lost years, I know I’m a woman – and trans ideology is a cult



Bethany feels she was rushed into taking testosterone and having a double mastectomy. Now in the process of ‘detransitioning’, she tells *Sian Griffiths* such treatments should not automatically be available to under-25s

After a double mastectomy and seven years of injecting herself with testosterone, Bethany realised a year ago that she no longer wanted to live as a man.

Petite and pretty, Bethany once had a beard and a moustache and still has traces of facial hair. She is now in a relationship with another woman, having realised she was not transgender but gay.

“I do regret the loss of time,” she says. “I am 26 and I think: ‘What have I done?’ For the past seven years, I felt like I was climbing a mountain to reach what I was told would be a future utopia – only to get to the top and find it was a cliff.

“My voice will not change. I will have to have electrolysis to remove the remaining facial hair. I have not looked into any possible long-term damage to my body and fertility. I am telling my story to try to safeguard other teenagers.”

There has been a sharp rise in the past decade in young people wanting to change gender. From 2011-12 to 2021-22,

the number of under-18s in England referred to the Tavistock clinic in north London for gender treatment soared from 210 to 3,585, according to its own figures.

Bethany is one of a number of “detransitioners” – young people often in their early twenties who have changed their minds about wanting to live as the opposite sex. They regret the hormones they have taken and surgery they have had, treatment that often started in their late teens.

“I feel more care could have been taken to explore my feelings and motivations before a referral for drug and surgical treatment that has irreversible physical consequences,” Bethany said.

Now working as a consultant for Our Duty, a group of parents with gender-questioning children, she is speaking out amid concerns that hundreds of 17-year-olds who were on the waiting list for the Tavistock, England’s only NHS gender

identity clinic for children, are being referred to adult NHS gender clinics. In the seven adult gender NHS clinics in England, surgery and cross-sex hormones are offered from the age of 18.

Earlier this year, the Tavistock’s gender identity clinic, which is being closed down after criticism of its practices, revealed there were 8,000 children under 18 on its waiting list, and confirmed it was sending the 17-year-olds on to the adult service.

Today more than 20 clinicians and practitioners, including Nick Temple, the former chief executive of the Tavistock, have written to The Sunday Times, calling for doctors to be extremely cautious when deciding whether to refer anyone under the age of 25 for cross-sex hormones or for surgery. They say some of the practices in England’s seven adult clinics are “gravely concerning”.

“We are a group of clinicians and academics concerned about the treatment of

young people, aged 17-25, in adult gender identity services,” they write. “One fifth of those referred to adult services are still legally children (17), and two thirds are developmentally adolescent (17-25). There is considerable evidence that identity may not settle until the mid-twenties.”

They add: “Some may argue that once young people are 18 they are adults, so consent is a simple matter. We disagree. Because of the complexity and co-morbidity in such cases, the decision to place these young people on a surgical pathway should be made with caution.”

David Bell, a senior psychiatrist and former staff governor at the Tavistock, who first warned that the national gender identity clinic might be failing vulnerable children, said: “Adolescents are still developing emotionally, psychologically and physically. Their brains do not stop developing until they are 24.

So there should be extreme caution before taking any irreversible life-changing decisions whose implications they are poorly equipped to fully understand.”

Bethany agrees. “I wish someone had advised me to properly explore my feelings when I was 19. I was offered no psychological therapy ... it is only now, at the age of 26, that I feel I am a mature adult, and it is no coincidence that it is now I am realising that transitioning is no solution.”

She hopes by telling her story to shine a spotlight on how quickly teenagers can be shuttled down a drug and surgery route to transitioning, as well as on some of the doctors and online groups, operating in the NHS and in private practice, who are treating and advising young people.

Bethany’s transgender journey started as an undergraduate at a London university. She had an unsettled childhood but

“
I wish I
had
been
advised
properly

“
How did
we
allow
this to
happen?

Designing hydrogen plants + Producing oil & gas

bp’s wider transformation is underway. Whilst today we’re mostly in oil & gas, we’ve increased global investment into our lower carbon & other transition businesses from around 3% in 2019 to around 30% last year.

£6,000

Cost of Bethany’s double mastectomy, performed privately by an NHS surgeon

never really thought of herself as anything other than female until then. At university, however, men were propositioning her and she “felt unsafe”.

The university, like many others, had an active LGBTQ group. Bethany, who was struggling to fit in and became so depressed she tried to kill herself, signed up. Soon she was spending hours trawling the internet looking at videos and photos of transgender people. When she saw a video of an athletic, attractive trans man, “that decided me ... I was like: ‘This is what I have to do. This makes sense. This will sort everything out.’”

Still in her first year, she cut her hair short and took a male name. She signed up to transgender support groups, including a large Facebook group run by transgender activists, which was a mine of information about how to transition.

“It had lists of doctors who will carry out surgery and give out hormones, their emails and their numbers. There are contact details for people trading chest binders and prosthetics, hair transplants, information about how to interpret your own blood tests, anything you might need.”

Armed with this information, at the start of her second year at university Bethany referred herself to a private clinic.

“Because of the waiting lists for NHS treatment that I had been told about, I went to see a doctor privately. I knew the NHS had long waiting lists and I had been advised that there were doctors working privately who might write prescriptions for the cross-sex hormones you take to start transitioning,” she said.

The appointment lasted about 45 minutes. Bethany says that she was told that she would need a hysterectomy after five years on hormones or she was at risk of cancer, and she had to decide that day whether or not she wanted children or wanted to freeze her eggs.

In the referral letter in September 2015, which The Sunday Times has seen, the consultant notes that Bethany had realised only a matter of months earlier – in March that year – that she identified as “trans”. Before that, he notes, she had regarded female-to-male transition as “weird”. He also records that she had a history of recent self-harm and suicide attempts.

Bethany says that, without further psychological investigation beyond that first appointment, the consultant referred her to an endocrinologist “with a view to discussing testosterone supplements”. The endocrinologist, as well as working in the NHS, also operated privately. Within weeks, Bethany had started injections of the hormone.

After a second phonecall appointment six months later, Bethany was then referred to a breast surgeon and an NHS adult gender clinic in Exeter to have her breasts removed. Six months after starting testosterone, Bethany, by then 20, had a double mastectomy. The surgeon worked for the NHS but did the operation privately. It cost £6,000.

Problems after the drugs and the surgery led to more medical treatment. Bethany had to go back in for “revision surgery” to remove flaps of skin left over from her breast operations. The repeated injections of testosterone led to facial hair and a deeper voice and left her feeling “wired” all the time, with an urge to go running and do weights at the gym. She became very muscular and was prescribed injections of puberty-blocking drugs to try to stop the cramps she was experiencing two years into the testosterone treatment.

The aim, she says now, was to “be perfect, to look perfect, to have a perfect body”. Her new look garnered attention and praise on campus.

Then the pandemic hit. She lost contact with the activists and after meeting more trans men in real life she realised “we were all just lesbians” and started to question the path she was on.

“I stopped taking the testosterone every month, the gaps got longer. I had my last injection a year ago. It took time for the mental and physical effects to start to fade but now I am feeling normal and sane, in control of my thoughts and feelings.”

For now, Bethany is remaining anonymous because of concern about a backlash from the trans community. “I have attended women’s-rights events and seen activists with banners and chanting slogans like ‘Death before detransition’ and ‘Arm trans people’ and ‘Terfs should die’,” she said. (A terf is a trans-exclusionary radical feminist – a derogatory word for a person whose views on gender identity are considered hostile to transgender people.)

“It is alarming but people need to understand this is worse than Scientology, it is like a cult,” she said. “It’s in schools, in universities, on social media. How have we allowed this to happen? It has to stop.”

The clinic declined to comment due to patient confidentiality.

Bethany is a pseudonym

Letters, page 26

DEER ME, IT’S WARM

ALEX LENTATI/LNP



Deer cool off in a stream in Richmond Park, southwest London. Forecasters predict a warm and sunny bank holiday weekend, especially in southern England. Weather, page 29

Lower jail term for killer rapist who set victim on fire

Marc Horne and Joanne Warnock

Jill Barclay, an oil firm engineer and mother of two aged 47, was grabbed walking home from a concert, beaten with a brick, raped, then set on fire while alive.

The judge in the subsequent murder trial said the attack was “unimaginably wicked and medieval in barbarity”.

Lord Arthurson, however, went on to give the killer a reduced jail term because Scottish sentencing guidelines say that, being under 25, he should get special dispensation. Rhys Bennett, 23, described in his home town as a “loner” and “gun nut”, was given 24 years, rather than the 29 he might have expected. The decision has prompted calls for a rethink of the guidelines, introduced by the independent Scottish Sentencing Council, which have already led to a rapist avoiding jail.

“There has been such a public outcry that it is now inevitable that these guidelines will be looked at again,” said Roddy Dunlop KC, dean of the Faculty of Advocates, which represents senior Scottish lawyers. “I do wonder whether it could have been intended that the guidelines should apply in cases of true depravity.”

Calum Steele, the recently retired general secretary of the Scottish Police Federation, said there was “a definite and perverse inconsistency” about the way young people were treated in the Scottish justice system. On the one hand, he

argued, they can serve in the police, the army, and on juries, and vote. On the other, their age is used in mitigation in even the most serious crimes.

He said: “Various policies suggest those under 25 are competent to make any decision in respect of the impact of their behaviour on themselves – but not on others. This is simply incoherent.”

Humza Yousaf, the first minister, confirmed the council had been asked to provide clarification over the future of the guidance. The council said the policy was based on independent evidence from around the world on what contributes to offending by young people. Earlier this year, Sean Hogg was given 270 hours of unpaid work for raping a 13-year-old girl because he had been 17 at the time.

Bennett, who grew up in Edzell, Angus, but was working in Aberdeen, attacked Barclay on September 16, in Dyce, a quiet neighbourhood of the city, subjecting her to a prolonged and frenzied assault, leaving her with cuts, fractures and other severe injuries all over her body. As she lay bleeding he calmly went to his digs before returning with a can of petrol from his van.

“Your victim was still alive when you set that fire,” Lord Arthurson said. “To be crystal clear, you burnt her alive. Your offending is of an exceptional gravity. You took away her future and the hopes and dreams of her family.”

Sandra Macdonald, a Labour councillor and member of the Aberdeen Women’s Alliance, said: “The community of Dyce, and the entire city, is still reeling from what happened.

“I cannot comprehend how the man who did this to Jill received a lesser sentence because he was under 25. People of that age are perfectly capable of knowing right from wrong.”

“Jill was struck down in her prime in an act of unimaginable cruelty,” said Barclay’s family. “It is outrageous that a woman can’t walk home safely at night.”



Jill Barclay was beaten and raped by Rhys Bennett, 23, who then set her alight while still alive. Under Scottish guidelines he was given a lighter sentence as a young person



And, not or.

Keeping oil and gas flowing where and when it’s needed and increasing investment in the transition to lower carbon energy. That’s our strategy. Right now in Teesside, we’re designing one of the UK’s first gas-fired power plants with carbon capture and two hydrogen plants – to help Britain get closer to its ambition for 10GW of low-carbon hydrogen production capacity by 2030. Each project is designed to reduce emissions, helping create and protect jobs in the north of England. And, crews are operating a drilling rig, destined to help one of our existing facilities keep delivering the energy needed to meet critical demand.



Discover more
bp.com/PlansIntoAction

Death of teenage boys starts race to clamp down on e-motorbike danger

Last week’s fatal crash in Cardiff turned the spotlight on electric motorcycles, which police warn are also being used by gangs



Harvey Evans loved bikes and motorcy-cles. At 15 he was already an experienced rider, having gone off-road up the moun-tains with his father every week since he was three.

His family indulged his interest with an electric motorcycle as an early 16th birth-day present and last Monday he and his friend Kyrees Sullivan, 16, were speeding around their Cardiff housing estate on it.

At one point, with a police van follow-ing them, they appear to have reached 28mph. Moments later they crashed. Both died. Their deaths raise serious

questions about the safety of the power-ful electric motorbikes and mopeds being bought and used by young people around the country, in some cases, for criminal purposes.

“There is a trend now, no different to 15 years ago, when everybody on the estates had a petrol-powered pit-bike,” said Jamie Masterman, director of Urban Moto, an electric moped retailer with Ministry of Defence contracts to supply Britain’s special forces with the vehicles.

“Thieves and criminals are choosing electric mopeds for the same reason special forces use them – they’re light-weight, make no noise, and can accelerate quickly.”

Industry experts examining CCTV footage taken minutes before the crash say the bike the boys were riding looks similar to a Sur-Ron electric motorcycle moped, costing £4,495. Weighing just 51kg, they have a top speed of 30mph,

although they can be modified for off-road use. The model and whether the rider had the correct licence for on-road riding forms part of a South Wales Police investigation.

On-the-road riders of electric mopeds must be 16 or older, with a provisional moped licence and Compulsory Basic Training certificate (CBT).

Harvey and Kyrees were not wearing helmets at the time of the crash. It was not clear which of the boys was driving.

“Sadly it was only a matter of time before something like this happened,” said Canon Jan Gould, who has led the Church of Resurrection in Ely for 17 years. “There are just so many of these boys whizzing around the estate on these electric machines now. It was literally an accident waiting to happen.”

In recent years, police forces in the UK and Ireland have been warning about such bikes being used by criminal gangs

“
Sadly, it was only a matter of time before something like this happened with so many lads whizzing around on these machines

Canon Jan Gould

to transport drugs quickly to customers. London has been blighted by masked robbers on e-mopeds and motorbikes.

The Met’s Operation Venice was set up specifically to tackle “motorcycle-enabled crime”, targeting robbery hotspots in central, south and west London, with 180 victims attacked each week. The team is authorised to use “tac-tical contact” to bump suspects off mopeds or e-bikes, in a game of cat and mouse across the capital.

“These Sur-Ron e-bikes are difficult to target,” Detective Inspector Treasa O’Donoghue has previously said. “They can go through red lights, with or against the flow of traffic, carrying out phone snatches along the way.”

Outside London, Sur-Ron bikes have been used in at least two fatal shootings on Merseyside in 2021. Patrick Boyle, 26, was shot twice in the chest in Huyton by a gunman on a black Sur-Ron electric bike.

In May last year, a 17-year-old from Lan-cashire died riding a Sur-Ron bike without a helmet. He had borrowed the bike from a friend.

There were riots in Ely, the part of Cardiff where the boys lived, after Mon-day’s crash. Cars were torched and police officers were pelted with missiles after it emerged a police vehicle had followed the boys.

“The vast majority in Ely are good, decent people,” Canon Gould said. “They’d give you their last penny. But there’s also this other section of the community, less than five per cent, I’d say, who are lawless and they look for trouble in everything, and we saw this the other night. They will latch on to any chance to have a go at the police.”

Another leader in the community, Kevin Williams, used to run the 47th St Francis Scout group in Ely until it was dis-banded because of cost pressures. “Since

Meet the woman who got M&S shimmying up the style charts

Louise Eccles
Consumer Affairs Editor

Maddy Evans is the sort of woman who could make an old ripped T-shirt look stylish. It is this quality that has made her Marks & Spencer’s secret weapon in its turnaround from forgettable to fashionable.

When she arrived from Topshop in 2019 as the company’s director of womenswear, sales were nosediving and the chief executive at the time, Steve Rowe, admitted M&S had a reputation for “frumpiness”.

But just four years later, Evans has made its clothes desirable again.

Last week, M&S revealed sales of “clothing and home” rose by 11.5 per cent to £3.72 billion in the year to April 1, bolstered by a 40 per cent rise in sales of both casual dresses and its pricier Autograph range.

It sold almost one in five pairs of jeans bought by women last year, making it more popular than any other retailer, and it now stocks styles it has not sold before, such as wide leg, mum jeans and boyfriend jeans.

Evans, 50, said she had to swallow “a bravery pill” when she began transforming the clothes offering of a company with an increasingly dowdy reputation for selling mostly cheap black trousers and bland underwear. “We want to find that sweet spot, those items in the wardrobe that mum and daughter both want to wear,” she said.

Richard Price, who joined from F&F Clothing to become the managing director of clothing and home in 2020, said: “We were boring. We lacked relevance. We didn’t make a statement when you walked in that said: ‘We know what’s on trend and we are going to bring it to you.’ We were designing for a historical customer with a mindset of: ‘Well, we can’t let go of this because it’s sold well in the past’, rather than: ‘Next year we will have something completely different because this is what we are predicting customers will want.’”

They also used to get colours wrong. “M&S would always know that pink was on trend but they would get the wrong pink,” said Price. “It was just off.”

Before revamping the dress collection, the pair tried the clothes on models of various heights, sizes and ages. “They weren’t quite as flattering as we first thought. We looked again at how they were constructed,” said Evans. They now sell more casual, midi length dresses, and have removed the “old-fashioned” long stitched darts that had

A reputation for frumpiness is being cast off

featured on their clothes for decades.

Evans was hired at a similar time to several other senior executives who brought a fresh perspective. Lisa Illis, head of womenswear design, used to work for Nike and started 4½ years ago. Helen Wilson, head of merchandising for womenswear, came from Topshop in 2020, the same year that Price, 57, joined.

He recalls how, during a meeting with executives during the pandemic, Evans fought for a mannequin to be dressed in a hooded top, wide-leg jogging bottoms and white trainers with a formal woollen coat over the top. Mixing casual with formal had not been done before.

“We are a market leader and we’ve got to behave like a market leader and set trends, but in a way tailored for our customers. Customers look to us for inspiration and I don’t think we ever quite believed that,” Price said.

He said mannequins wearing a pink loose-fitting



Maddy Evans has overseen a rise in clothing sales

cropped beach top and white linen trousers that expose the midriff, which are now a common sight in M&S stores, are something they would “definitely have talked ourselves out of that a few years ago”. He said they would have been “worried about getting angry letters.”

Evans said they were now focused on an ageless core customer who they have dubbed the “modern mainstream”. But who is the modern mainstream? “She wants to buy clothes which make her feel confident and relevant in front of her friends and family and which gives her style credibility and good value without chasing every trend,” she said.

Stores have also been rearranged so that customers shop more by curated themes rather than by garment.

Row upon row of neatly stacked men’s polo shirts have remained, however, in acknowledgement that men and women do not always shop in the same way.

A poll of shoppers by YouGov ranked M&S as the third most stylish brand on the high street, up from fifth two years ago, only behind Next and Zara. It has its eye on Next’s spot.

When we profit, so do our members.





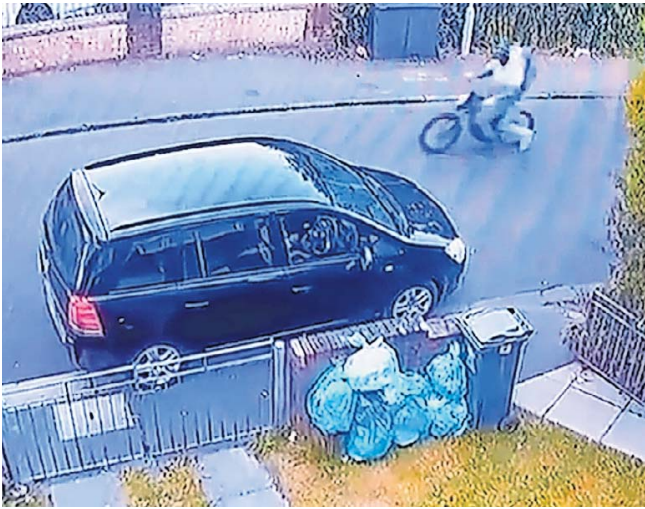
Kyrees Sullivan, above, and Harvey Evans, far right, died on Monday when their electric motorbike



crashed. Locals released balloons as a mark of respect at a vigil for them in Ely, Cardiff, on Friday

we were forced to disband a couple of years ago, I've noticed a dramatic increase in antisocial behaviour among that age group," he said. "Drugs are an increasing problem too. They're being couriered around the estate by these kids on electric bikes. You see it all the time." There is no evidence Harvey and Kyrees were involved in such criminal activity. On Friday night, 800 friends, relatives and members of the community held a vigil for the dead boys in Ely. Harvey's

aunt, Hayley Murphy, told the BBC: "His dad used to take him off-road biking up the mountains every week since he was three years old. It still doesn't seem real that we're here for Harvey and Kyrees." Harvey's grandmother, Dawn Rees, said the boys "did everything together, they loved each other like brothers. [Kyrees] was lovely. If I needed milk, he went to the shop for me, always asking if I needed anything. A lovely boy." The Driver and Vehicle Standards



Agency (DVSA) has intensified its monitoring of the sales of powerful electric bikes in the UK. Last year the DVSA brought a prosecution against a London-based company for illegally supplying a different type of dangerously powerful electric bike. Hi-Fi Confidential Bike UK pleaded guilty at Highbury magistrates court in London and was fined £3,864 for fitting electric pedal bikes with 750-watt motors, three times the legal limit, capable of speeds of 32mph.

Masterman does not think the answer lies simply in banning certain types of bike. "If they weren't on that brand they would be on something else – or a faster e-bike," he said. "This is about part educating young people, and part having enough facilities for people to ride in," he said. The DVSA now has a marketing intelligence unit that scans electric bike websites for how they are being advertised. The DVSA's market surveillance investi-



gator, Sadie Clarke, said: "[We] will continue to make sure the growing electric bicycle market is safe for everyone by ensuring they have had their design and construction properly approved." South Wales Police said it could not comment on the make and model of the electric bike being ridden by Evans and Sullivan at the time of their deaths as it formed part of continuing investigations. Sur-Ron's UK dealer was contacted for comment.

Over-50s heed call to fill teaching gap and go back to school

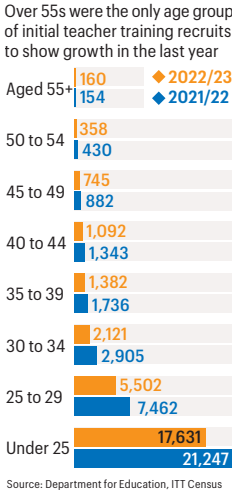
Sian Griffiths and Narottam Medhora

Richard Lewis will be 70 on Tuesday. A former City banker, he plans to ride a motorbike until he is 80 – and be a teacher for as long. He is one of a growing number of over-55s propping up classrooms all over England amid a teacher shortage crisis. It is the only age group in which teacher training recruits have increased over the past year. Deborah Mills, the head of Now Teach, a charity that supports high-flying professionals to change career, is calling on over-60s to consider retraining as teachers as schools struggle to recruit. The situation is so acute that some schools warn they may have to stop teaching some subjects at A-level, such as design and technology, in the next academic year because they cannot hire specialist teachers. Fewer than half the targeted number of trainee secondary teachers are due to start in September, according to figures from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). In some subjects it is less than 20 per cent. Biology, history, classics and PE are the only subjects on track to meet government targets. Ministers have already begun a scheme to lure foreign teachers to English schools with a £10,000 "international relocation payment" to fill vacancies in physics and languages. Mills, 64, left a highly paid job as an executive at the advertising company Saatchi & Saatchi five years ago to retrain as an English teacher before becoming chief executive of Now Teach in January. She said: "We are hearing from schools that teacher shortages are so great in subjects such as German and computer science that they simply cannot offer those subjects at A-level. "In one northern academy chain I went to, they don't have enough geography teachers so three classes have to sit together in the hall – nearly 100 kids – to have a lesson. It is a crisis and older career changers could be a solution."

Lewis quit his City job – and his six-figure salary – seven years ago to retrain as a history teacher, and works at the City of London Academy in east London. It is a job that he loves. "I have been told to f*** off by kids and I have broken up fights. My worst moment came in my second year of teaching when all the kids were running round the room texting each other, totally out of control. "But sometimes teaching kids is no different from dealing with the boards of our major companies: over-inflated egos, people behaving badly and thinking they can get away with it." Lucy Kellaway, 63, the former Financial Times columnist who co-founded Now Teach, said: "You will find more schools having to drop subjects like economics,

computer science and languages because they cannot find teachers to teach them. Schools will have to ask teachers who are not subject experts to step in. That is already happening and it is going to be miles worse in the autumn. "We have been calling out to the over-50s to change career – now it is a call-out to the over-60s." Despite rising during the pandemic, the number of teachers being recruited has plummeted in the past year. A total of 28,991 teachers were recruited in 2023, down from 36,159 in 2022, according to the Department for Education. Secondary school postgraduate recruitment is 41 per cent below target. Recruitment in every age group fell in the past year, except one. The number of new teachers over the age of 55 rose, from 154 in 2021-22 to 160 in 2022-23. That compares with drops in other

AGE PROFILES



age groups. The number of new teachers under the age of 30 fell from 28,709 in 2021-22 to 23,133 in 2022-23. One factor being blamed for the collapse in new trainees coming forward and the high rate of new teachers quitting is what is being called the work-from-home factor. Younger people are shying away from a job in Britain that is still five days a week "in the office", according to a recent report from the NFER. Despite the long holidays, many feel jealous of friends or family able to stay at home for some, or all, the working week when they have to be in the classroom every day. Mills says there may have been the odd low moment, including "eating a soggy baked potato with tinned tuna while doing double lavatory duty and having a colleague walk by and say: 'If your friends at Saatchi could see you now'." But she says the rewards are immense. "One child made a framed poster for me beginning with all the words I had taught them that started with i . . . It said 'Miss Mills is inspiring, intelligent and idiosyncratic' and they were all spelt correctly," she adds.



Unlike banks, we share our profits with our members. We call it The Nationwide Fairer Share.



Malcesine, Lake Garda, Italy



lakes & mountains

Meal with a view? Yes please.

Get a taste for local flavours



Please see www.tui.co.uk or the relevant brochure for booking terms and conditions. All the flights and flight-inclusive holidays are financially protected by the ATOL scheme. When you pay you will be supplied with an ATOL Certificate. Please ask for it and check to ensure that everything you booked (flights, hotels and other services) is listed on it. Please see our booking conditions for further information or for more information about financial protection and the ATOL Certificate go to: www.caa.co.uk. TUI is a trading name of TUI UK Limited, a member of TUI Group. Registered Office: Wigmore House, Wigmore Lane, Luton, LU2 9TN. Registered in England No: 2830117. ATOL No: 2524. ABTA No: V5126.

Pundit’s matchless chance to flag up anorexia failings

In his penultimate Soccer Saturday, a tearful Jeff Stelling spoke out about the eating disorder. It was the highlight of his career

Hugo Daniel

For nearly 30 years he has been the face of Saturday football television, delivering the scores and on-pitch drama with characteristic composure.

But last week Jeff Stelling halted pre-match discussion in Sky Sports’s *Soccer Saturday* to make a tearful impromptu speech about eating disorders, excoriating the government’s lack of awareness and funding as a “national disgrace”.

A clip of his speech went viral and Stelling, 68, says he thinks it was the most important thing he has done in his career. He had “no idea” about eating disorders until the daughter of a family friend developed anorexia about five years ago. Stelling felt compelled to speak after seeing how “unbelievably destructive” the disease was. “I’ve seen the destructiveness of it not just for the people suffering the eating disorders but also for the family unit,” he said.

His friend’s daughter was admitted to hospital and later a mental health unit and was sectioned. “Her attitude was, ‘I want to be the thinnest person in the world’, and when told that that might kill her she said, ‘I don’t care. I’d rather die than not be thinner. I need to be the thinnest person in the world’.”

Stelling added: “The longer these things are left untreated, the deeper into that mental morass these kids go. They lack any sort of insight, they lose touch with reality, their mental health is such that they’re in a terrible, terrible place.”

He visited a private eating disorder unit, which he found “harrowing”. “Look, this is going to sound a terrible exaggeration but it’s not, I’ve seen pictures at the end of the Second World War of the prison camps and emaciated prisoners, and I’ve also seen young teenage girls in that condition at an eating disorder centre,” he said.

“If Rishi Sunak was to go to one of

these units his heart would bleed. I’ve seen this in action, and the lack of awareness, the lack of specialist treatment, the lack of centres, and the lack of funding, just makes the problem of epidemic size really.”

Stelling made his comments after *Soccer Saturday* aired a discussion fronted by the reporter Abigail Davies, who has had anorexia, and including the former player Paul Merson and a consultant psychiatrist at the Priory hospital in Roehampton, southwest London. In it Davies said that, at the height of her illness, she had planned her own funeral. Last week, she said she had cried when she watched Stelling’s speech.

Addressing the camera for a minute and a half, he said: “This is a difficult topic ... I’ve got to be careful to get it right. More people die from eating disorders every year than any other mental illness. The government’s lack of awareness and funding is a national disgrace. They decided to put calories, for goodness’ sake, on people’s menus.”

“The cycle goes like this. Boy, girl, woman, man, goes for help, they are told they are not thin enough, they are not underweight enough to need treatment. They go away, they lose more weight, they go further and deeper into the mental morass that they’re in. They have suicidal tendencies. They are then told, ‘You are now too thin to be treated’ and are offered palliative care, for God’s sake. So



Bournemouth v Man Utd: Lerma shows Stelling felt “compelled to speak” after the ordeal of a friend’s daughter

we’re not going to help you but we will try and ensure you die comfortably. It’s 2023. Eating disorders are being swept under the carpet. No one should be dying of an eating disorder in 2023. Those with eating disorders need action and help and they need it now.”

Stelling presented his final *Soccer Saturday* show this weekend and will be taking a break before moving on to new projects. “I’m fortunate to have the platform to be able to do that and I was also aware that I’m not going to have that platform after [today],” he said.

Stelling, who has three grown-up children, said he had seen how critical early intervention was. “My friend’s child was dispatched urgently to a hospital. She had a heart rate of 31; most people’s sleeping heart rate is higher than that, so she was literally starving herself to death.” He said a psychiatrist came to see her while she was eating. She promised him she would keep doing so when she went home and was discharged that day.

Stelling added: “You still get people who say, ‘For God’s sake, give them a square meal’ and if I hear that ever again I’d probably be violent, because it’s much more complex than that.”

About 1.25 million people in the UK have an eating disorder, according to the charity Beat, with anorexia having the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric disorder, caused by medical complications associated with the illness as well as suicide. There was a surge in cases during the pandemic. The charity provided 300 per cent more support sessions via its helpline and online in 2021-22 compared with pre-pandemic levels.

Beat has campaigned for every medical school to provide proper eating disorder training after a survey found 69 per cent of sufferers felt their GP did not know how to help them.

Recalling the impact of Stelling’s words, Davies, 31, said: “I just burst into tears because it meant absolutely everything to me. Jeff Stelling is someone who I’ve looked up to for many years. He is a titan of our industry and to have him eloquently and passionately support a cause so close to my heart. It just elevates him even further for me. He has given a voice and a platform to an illness that is so often dismissed and failed.”

THE ART OF THE WHEEL

PAUL QUEZADA-NEIMAN/ALAMY



Stunt rider Danny Butler captivates crowds in Trafalgar Square with extreme mountain bike tricks in front of the National Gallery as part of the Ford RideLondon festival. A giant screen also showed live coverage of competitors taking part in the three-day Classique road race through the capital and Essex, part of the UCI Women’s WorldTour

Singer signs a new deal decades after her rejection

Ellie McDonald

Revenge is a dish best served cold for the comedian Alexis Strum. Having landed a record deal at just 21, her first album, *Addiction*, was about to be launched when the label pulled out.

Two decades later, Strum, 45, decided to release her album online – and now has a new deal with Warner Records. “I was on my lunch break at my IT job one day, and I thought, f*** it, how hard can it be?,” she said. “I wanted to take my power back. I didn’t make my music for the record labels – I made it for people to listen to.”

Strum put her songs on Spotify in April and became what she describes as “an almost pop star” overnight. More than 20 years after her first foray into the industry, she is “delighted” to have secured a record deal. “The general public will finally be able to make their own decision about my music,” she said. “This has shown me the power of social [media] and how empowering it is to take your career into your own hands, especially as a woman of a certain age.”

Strum said she initially worried about releasing her songs. “I was scared when I first uploaded the music,” she

said. “[I thought]: ‘Are people going to compare what I looked like 20 years ago to how I look now?’ The very fact I was considering my looks is because I know there’s a bias – you’re not allowed to get older in this industry as a woman.”

“But I wanted to prove to other women in my age group that we aren’t invisible. Why shouldn’t I put a record out?”

She said she had emails from strangers pleased to see her success. “It’s a lovely story for them to see someone going, ‘It didn’t work out for me at first but now I’m going to take the power back!’”

We’re helping make energy prices more predictable for everyone.

By increasing the UK’s gas storage by 50%.

So the 10 million homes and businesses who rely on us today, can rely on us tomorrow too.

UP TO £300 OFF*

Make the most of being together

Our expert audiologists can help you enjoy all of your favourite moments to the full. And right now we have up to £300 off our bestselling hearing aids, with a 90-day money back guarantee. So getting together can be better than ever.

Book your **FREE** hearing check today**

visit [bootshearingcare.com](https://www.bootshearingcare.com) or call 0345 200 7052†

*Offer ends 30th June 2023 and cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Available across all platinum and gold technology. Money off value halved on single purchases. **Over 18s and Hearingcare stores only, one free hearing check per year. †Terms and conditions apply. ‡Local call rates apply and mobiles may vary.



STATE OF PLAY
Households have so far been shielded from energy cost hikes thanks to the Energy Price Guarantee

PRODUCED IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH THE UK GOVERNMENT

ACT NOW: 7 TIPS TO USE LESS ENERGY AT HOME THIS SUMMER

As it gets warmer and we use our heating less, reducing electricity and water use becomes the most effective way to save energy. Here are some tips to do this at home



CHANGE SHOWER HABITS
Installing an energy-efficient shower head could save you up to £55 a year as it reduces the amount of water used by either regulating the flow or aerating the water. If you have an electric shower, some have an “eco” mode. Also, reducing showering time to four minutes will save water and money on energy bills – up to £90 a year. If the water is metered, it will also save money on the water bill.



TURN APPLIANCES OFF AT THE SOCKET
Electrical appliances like computers, televisions, smart devices and video game consoles are nicknamed “vampire devices” because they draw power continuously unless unplugged. Turning off the power switch at the socket or unplugging the appliances when they’re not in use could save up to £70 a year.



SWITCH TO LED BULBS
Switching to energy-saving lightbulbs could save you up to £55 a year. Standard or incandescent light bulbs are very energy inefficient. LED lightbulbs last longer than traditional bulbs, saving on maintenance costs. The amount of light, or colour of the light (white to yellow) is not linked to a bulb’s energy usage, so you can get the same light at a much lower energy cost.



AVOID THE TUMBLE DRYER
Using your tumble dryer less could save you £70 a year: tumble dryers are one of the most energy-intensive devices in the home. Use your tumble dryer less frequently by ensuring you have a full load, around three-quarters of the drum. Or use a clothes airer to dry clothes outside, or inside with a window open for ventilation. You should also avoid overfilling your dryer as this could lengthen the drying time.



REDUCE THE BOILER FLOW TEMPERATURE
If you own a combi boiler, its flow can be reduced to around 60C (65C if you are a pensioner or have pre-existing health conditions). Flow temperature is the temperature of the water that your boiler sends to radiators. Reducing it isn’t the same as lowering your thermostat and won’t noticeably reduce the temperature of your home, but may increase the time it takes to reach the target temperature on your thermostat.



HAVE THE HEATING SYSTEM SERVICED
Summer is a quieter period and therefore it’s easier to find a professional engineer. Having it serviced now means that your heating is primed and ready for a cold snap.



WASH CLOTHES AT 30C
Washing clothes at a lower temperature could save you up to £40 a year. Changing from 40C to 30C means you could get three cycles instead of two using the same amount of energy, depending on the washing machine.

Find more energy-saving actions
at gov.uk/helpforhouseholds

HELP FOR HOUSEHOLDS

Bills to pay? Help is at hand

Everyone should have had support from the government with energy bills, plus there’s help available with the cost of living. With more than 40 schemes out there, it’s worth taking time to see if you’re eligible

The arrival of summer is always welcome. Aside from being able to enjoy the sun, it means we won’t have to heat our homes for months. The high price of energy has been a worry for Britons having to cope with the cost of living.

Last year, as the scale of the impending energy crisis became clear, the government stepped in to help most households with their energy bills. Between October of last year and this March it provided a £400 discount to most British households through the Energy Bills Support Scheme so people could get through the winter.

Since October it has also used the Energy Price Guarantee (EPG) to shield customers from steeper energy increases. The EPG provides protection from big hikes in energy costs by limiting the amount suppliers can charge per unit of gas and electricity. The EPG is guaranteed to stay in place until the end of June, cushioning bills from Ofgem’s new price cap.

That means, due to the Energy Price Guarantee and Energy Bills Support Scheme, the government has covered about half of a typical household energy bill this



“
By late June,
energy bill payers
will have saved
around £1,500

winter, saving around £1,500 by the end of June. For most, the reduction is made direct and there is no need to apply, so beware of scammers offering to sort out unmade payments for you and then asking for bank details.

In Northern Ireland, households are due a £600 payment to help with energy bills over the past six months. This will be made up of £400 of support from the Energy Bills Support Scheme Northern Ireland plus £200 of support from the Alternative Fuel Payment (AFP) scheme. AFP support goes to all households regardless of how they heat their home. Again most people do not need to apply for payment or contact an electricity supplier.

As for the one in seven UK households who use prepayment meters, these should already have received vouchers for this amount. Where your voucher can be redeemed, either Post Office or PayPoint, will be clearly indicated. Each voucher expires after 90 days. If your voucher does expire, it can be reissued.

All vouchers must be redeemed by June 30, 2023, so don’t miss out.

Though approximately 80 per cent of the vouchers have been redeemed, millions of pounds of support is as yet unclaimed. Perhaps some people feel they don’t deserve support, but everyone has the right to benefit from these schemes if they are eligible.

There’s more help available, too. Many people in the UK may be unaware they are eligible for one or more of the 40-plus support schemes assisting the most vulnerable that are detailed on the government’s Help for Households website. This includes those on means-tested benefits – including jobseeker’s allowance, income support, pension credit, universal credit, child tax credit and working tax credit – who will automatically receive £900 in cost of living payments. The payments are made separately from benefit payments and split into three: £301 was paid this month; a further £300 will be

paid during autumn 2023; and a final £299 paid during spring 2024.

On top of that, automatic payments worth £150 for eligible disabled people will be paid this summer, and £150 for pensioners who usually receive Winter Fuel Payments in November. You are eligible for a Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2023 to 2024 if you were born before 25 September 1957.

The Help for Households campaign aims to raise awareness about who is eligible and what they might be due, including help from the local council’s Household Support Fund in England, Discretionary Assistance Funding in Wales, a Discretionary Support or a Short-term Benefit Advance in Northern Ireland or a Crisis or Community Care Grant in Scotland.



Scan the QR
code to find
out more about
government
support

Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Fund



Most households have received a £400 discount automatically from their electricity supplier between October 2022 and March 2023 to support them with their energy bills. Those households who did not receive the support automatically, as they do not have a domestic electricity supply, may be eligible



to apply for the **Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Fund** until May 31. This includes partially or wholly self-funded care home residents, park home residents, and residents in housing associations. Search ‘energy bills alternative fund’ on gov.uk or call 0808 175 3287 to check your eligibility.



SAVE MONEY (AND THE PLANET) WITH OUR HOUSE HACKS

Britons reveal the things they’ve been doing to lower energy consumption and bring those bills down

‘WE AVOID USING THE DISHWASHER’



Pensioners Harriet Martin, 79, and husband Chris, 78, began making changes to their 1930s semi in Bournville, Birmingham, when they downsized in 2010.

They’ve since taken its EPC (energy performance certificate) rating from E to B through a range of measures. “We looked at everything from low-cost gains like DIY insulation, water-saving toilets and low-energy bulbs to more expensive measures like solar panels and double glazing,” says Harriet. “With the Winter Fuel Payment and the £400 payment from the government, our energy bills are just below £1,000.”

Nevertheless, as pensioners the couple still have to watch every penny. “We set the thermostat to 18C in cold weather, wear thermal underwear and two jerseys, and use a wood burner. We wash clothes on low temperatures and avoid using the dishwasher, which drains the solar electricity we generate, so it’s lots of small measures too.”

‘WE HAD THE BOILER SERVICED’



Emmanuel Asuquo, 37, lives in Bromley, Kent with partner Mariam, 38, and their four children. When confronted with rising energy bills, the business adviser took drastic steps.

“With all the adjustments we have made, along with the government support, we’ve nearly halved our bill. I made a raft of changes, including introducing an energy-free hour in which we all share some downtime in the living room, reading or playing games. It sounds tough but it means we spend more time together.

“I got a smart meter so the kids could see where the money was being spent. Having the boiler serviced made a big difference. It was old and inefficient, meaning we had to put it up really high to warm up the house. It’s now on a strict timer because we forget to shut it off.”

On a mission, Emmanuel looked online for more ideas. “The curtains covered the radiators so we shortened them and moved sofas around to let the heat flow better.”

‘WE INSTALLED A SMART METER’



Nils and Georgina Mueller live in a three-bedroom terrace home in Teignmouth, Devon, with their two daughters. Nils, 43, runs a canoe tours business and Georgina, 42, works in a cafe.

“The money from the government definitely helped us because we can’t really claim any benefit apart from child benefit.

“We used to live in a small bungalow that was easy to heat but we now have an older house so we looked at what we could do practically,” Nils says. “I trained as an electrician so I fitted LED lights everywhere, but the biggest change was getting a smart meter. The colour coding for usage helped us all become more conscious.”

In addition, the couple have made lots of incremental changes to their consumption. “We keep the heating temperature down, wash on colder temperatures and use the air fryer to cook. I’ve done some loft insulation but because it’s an old house we can’t have cavity insulation.”

‘WE INSULATED THE CUPBOARDS’



Kirsty Devine, 37, lives in Halifax with her husband Darren, 42, a gas engineer, and their son. She runs a handmade soft furnishings company.

“Over the winter we had payments from the government, which were very helpful,” Kirsty says. “We had decent credit on our energy account too, but by November it was getting eaten up at a rate of knots.”

“We were already being careful – my husband knew about reducing flow rates in the boiler and making sure radiators were working efficiently. We insulated under the kitchen cupboards as we knew they were a cold spot.

“We also turned the heating down and got the hot water bottles and blankets out for the evenings. We kept doors closed to keep heat in, and closed the curtains and blinds at dusk. In January, I started using the gas hob and microwave to cook as we’d found out how much the oven was costing. Now the slightly lower bills are coming in – so there is hope!”

Rod Liddle

Peter Rabbit, curry and reggae. That’s not cultural appropriation — it’s called civilisation



In the end, the injunction from his mother fell on deaf, rabbit ears. “Now run along, and don’t get into mischief,” Mrs Rabbit had warned Peter – but here he was, in the tumbрил, headed for the chop (and no Mr McGregor in sight). “Oh, what have you done, Peter?” she wailed.

Peter twitched his nose, rubbed his front paws together and replied: “Well, I very much fear that I have been a white supremacist, Mummy. Worse, through the cultural appropriation of African slave stories, I have embedded white supremacy in generations of human children.”

His mother shed a tear as the tumbрил trundled on. “Oh, how *could* you?”

Peter turned and shouted: “So have you, by the way, so you can stop looking so bloody self-righteous. You’re next. And just wait until they hear about Hazel and Bigwig.”

It had to happen. A woman at one of our wonderful universities has decreed that Beatrix Potter, whose family had connections to the slave trade, had nicked her stories about Peter Rabbit and Jemima Puddle-Duck from tales told by dispossessed Africans centuries earlier, notably those reproduced in the Brer Rabbit stories. Dr Emily Zobel Marshall said (among other things): “Her tales owe a debt to the Brer Rabbit stories . . . that needs to be fully acknowledged.”

Zobel Marshall is a reader in resentment studies, or something, at Leeds Beckett University. The “Beckett” bit is to let you know it isn’t actually Leeds University, by the way, but something that used to be called Leeds poly. It lies in 110th place in the national university league table, but performs quite well in Stonewall’s league table of gay-friendly employers.

It all reminds me of the time the arguably controversial leader Colonel Gaddafi asserted that the writer of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* was an Arab, because he was called “Sheikhspeare”.

But, anyway, how shall we carry out this acknowledgment to Ms Zobel Marshall’s satisfaction? More sackcloth and ashes, plus a bung of reparations to Uncle Remus? But then then the man behind Uncle Remus – the author Joel Chandler Harris – was, regrettably, white. He nicked those stories too.

That’s the point, the magic, about stories: how they evolve over the years rather like Chinese whispers (if that isn’t offensive). How they adapt to new audiences, becoming more nuanced and suited to the times.

There is nothing in the vast and yet stunted lexicon of wokery more dimwitted than the obsession with cultural appropriation. It’s even more stupid than the trans stuff or throwing statues into rivers. Those who would trash western Europe’s history because of colonialism take us back only three or

four hundred years. Railing against cultural appropriation takes you back to prehistory: it demolishes the world.

Everything good that humans have done has come about either directly or indirectly as a consequence of what is now called cultural appropriation. The exchange of ideas, the theft of ideas, the development of somebody else’s idea, the mixing of one idea with another. In a sense it is what makes us human.

Today, though, it has become just one more great excuse to start wallowing in a confected victimhood. You can, if you wish, outrage people who are desperate to be outraged simply by wearing an item of clothing identified with another culture, or calling your spicy evening meal a “curry” when nobody from Bengal had anything to do with its creation.

Cultural appropriation would insist that it is wrong for a white person to wear a sombrero or play gamelan music. It would presumably, by the same token, be cultural appropriation if a black person were to play classical music by some dead, stale, white German while dressed in a tie and tails.

If that allegation sounds obnoxious to your ears, that’s because it is obnoxious. All of it is. It is through cultural appropriation that we advance and create more beauty. George Gershwin was guilty of it. So was the brilliant black composer and pianist Margaret Bonds.

As ever, there are those who try to straddle the fence, to heal the divide. Their argument is that cultural appropriation is OK if it is done “with respect”. I think that this is even more deranged than the demand that it should be banned altogether. You do not need to show an ounce of respect when you pillage our shared, universal, culture. You can put pineapple on your pizza, wear a kimono while out shopping and even (if you’re a bit of a tosser, admittedly) be a white bloke and wear dreadlocks or cornrows. It’s how we advance as a species – and it’s good to see little Peter Rabbit leading the way.

“The magic of stories is how they evolve over the years and adapt to new audiences

Immigration reaches record levels



PHOTOBUBBLE: NICK NEWMAN

● I am grateful to the New Scientist for revealing that at Michigan State University you can become a doctor of philosophy by studying ... packaging. “We all have questions about packaging, such as what is packaging and why is it important to society,”

reads the university’s website, perhaps overstating the case a little. The deconstructionist Jacques Derrida would surely have argued that things have meaning only once they are packaged. “L’emballage, c’est tout! Tout!”

If only Eve hadn’t met the Tory snake

Those young people who rioted in Cardiff last week and attacked the police did so because the Conservative government has lowered living standards over the past 13 years. That’s according to that vat of sanctimony and sputum Mark Drakeford, the first minister of Wales.

It has occurred to me that every single act of human wickedness or stupidity in the world, right back to the fall, is the consequence of policies put in place by the Tories (and especially, perhaps, by Suella Braverman). If we had a Labour government, those kids would have been inside reading Plato or knitting peace jumpers for the next eisteddfod.

Hawks, doves and honeybees

A short, cheerful Maltese man has just called round to our house carrying a pair of shears and a large cardboard box. He is here to remove the swarm of five or six hundred honeybees from an elm tree by our front door.

As ever when the animal kingdom encroaches upon our territory, my wife and I differ on how we should deal with the problem. She is hawkish, favouring extreme defensive action. I usually simpler that we should just let the creatures be and everything will turn out OK.

We usually start with my approach and then adopt hers when it all goes pear-shaped and there are rats joining us at the dinner table.

This time it’s a compromise. The bees will be taken to a hive six miles away. So, they get to live – but they are deported and interned.

T SUBSCRIPTION

3 months Free Apple Music

Enjoy the world’s largest classical music catalogue with Apple Music Classical, which is included in an Apple Music subscription.

Visit thetimes.co.uk/classical



Scan for offer

THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES
Know your times



1 Ruslan, who was told he would be killed if he fled or retreated, spots a Ukrainian drone and begs for his life



2 He makes his way along the trench after a piece of paper in a plastic bag is dropped, telling him to "surrender and follow the drone"



3 Ruslan comes under fire in no man's land, probably from Russians trying to kill him for abandoning his position

Offered war, prison or a bullet, terrified Russians opt to desert

Thousands of traumatised troops are contacting a Ukrainian hotline so the ‘enemy’ can guide them to safety

Jack Clover

On the morning of May 9, as President Vladimir Putin’s generals polished their medals for the Victory Day parade in Moscow, a Russian soldier called Ruslan cowered in a trench outside Bakhmut, surrounded by death.

Above him a Ukrainian drone hovered, while behind him Russian mortars prepared to strike if he dared fall back. His options were to fight, flee or surrender, and only one did not lead to oblivion.

Ruslan’s next steps became a public relations coup for the Ukrainians. A video that has been shared around the world shows how the Russian signalled to the drone not to shoot and was led across no man’s land to the Ukrainian lines.

While the circumstances of Ruslan’s deliverance are unusual, he is not alone in breaking ranks to flee the chaotic and murderous Russian war machine.

The Ukrainian “I Want to Live” hotline, for Russian soldiers wishing to surrender, was contacted 3,174 times in April, a 10 per cent increase on the previous month.

After getting in touch on their own phones, willing Russians are encouraged to stay in touch using a burner phone “with buttons” – one that isn’t a smartphone – so they can’t be tracked as they are guided by a Ukrainian operator, and in some cases a drone, on the perilous journey to enemy lines.

Desertion is also on the rise.

Official Russian government data shows more court cases have been opened against soldiers for abandoning their unit so far this year, 1,053 cases, than in all of last year (1,001).

Meanwhile, brave volunteers, risking imprisonment by scouring social media posts and the graveyards of Siberia, are collating a picture of the Russian dead that is more accurate than ever before.

The names of 23,256 fatalities have been collated by the poteru.net project, a number that rises with each hour and is likely to be a fraction of the true figure.

What is life like for a Russian soldier? Is it love for the motherland, coercion or cash that drives them to die in the Donbas mud?

As a former prison officer in one of Russia’s brutal penal colonies, Ruslan said he was mobilised in September alongside 300,000 compatriots.

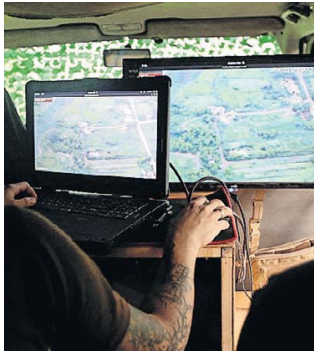
“For Ruslan, the choice was prison or war,” said Vladimir Osechkin, a Russian human rights campaigner who spoke to the soldier in Ukrainian custody this month and posted the interview on YouTube. Osechkin, who lives under permanent police protection in France, has previously faced criticism from Ukrainians after helping a former Wagner mercenary, Andrey Medvedev, flee to safety in Norway. Ten days ago Medvedev announced he wanted to return to Russia, despite the risk of death.

Interviewing a prisoner of war is a

grey area within the Geneva conventions, which protect captured soldiers from being turned into subjects of “public curiosity”. The extent to which anybody in captivity can truly speak freely is open to question and disclosing their identities can also expose them to danger if and when they return home.

Ruslan’s account, while it may be unreliable, is, however, a potentially rare insight into the final moments of those who will never be able to tell their story.

He was enlisted as a *gefrietor*, the equivalent of a corporal in a motor rifle division. On arrival in Ukraine he was



A Ukrainian operating a drone over Bakhmut, scene of intense fighting

told the division would act as a form of military police keeping order among Russian forces, but in early May he was told they were to travel to Bakhmut to replace Wagner Group mercenaries leaving their positions outside the town.

On May 8, Ruslan arrived outside the town in a troop transport – where, to his surprise, he and three fellow soldiers were handed over to the charge of a Wagner fighter, who sent them over the top to secure a trench.

“If you fall behind, I will annihilate you. If you refuse to fight, I will annihilate you,” the man said. “If you are caught in

“If you fall behind, I will annihilate you. If you refuse to fight, I will annihilate you. We will just finish you off”

fire on the way, no one will drag you out, we will just finish you off.” That’s how they escorted us to our positions,” recalls Ruslan in the interview. He and the two other newcomers spent hours in a trench lined with up to 40 bodies of Ukrainian and Wagner troops. A mortar barrage wounded all three, but no one replied when they radioed for help. One of the men had both legs broken by a Ukrainian drone. He is thought to have shot himself soon afterwards, knowing that no one would drag him out.

Ruslan found a foxhole. The third man sprinted past him, along the trench searching for cover, pursued by the drone. “There was an explosion, it caught him on his spine, he fell immediately, right in front of my eyes. He was alive but he couldn’t move his legs,” Ruslan said.

Moments later the man reached for his own grenade, whispered, “Brother, I feel bad”, and pulled the pin. “At that point I thought, I might as well give them a sign, the drone operator will by any case be a human,” he said.

A growing number of Russian conscripts, faced with the reality of the war, are trying to save themselves before they reach the trenches.

The organisation Go by the Forest, set up by a former St Petersburg activist, Grigory Sverdlin, helps Russian men who do not want to fight to go off-grid or leave the country to dodge the draft. They have

given advice to nearly 10,000 men since September, of whom roughly 10 per cent are deserters. “There’s definitely an increase compared with autumn. Now the flow [of deserters] is definitely larger,” said Anton Gorbatevich who himself fled after being called up to fight, but now helps others escape.

He is part of a network of volunteers in neighbouring countries that help deserters trek across the steppe or through the forest to dodge border points.

The best time to desert is when they are wounded at a military hospital, according to Gorbatevich.

“Doctors get soldiers to sign blank check-out forms so if they run away, the doctor can fill in the rest, with dates, so it looks like they have discharged them – therefore the responsibility would lie with the military unit and not with the doctors,” he said. A soldier has two days to leave the country after going Awol while a criminal case is lodged.

Dmitry, 27, a former officer who is in an undisclosed location, fled his military base in western Russia around February 23, a national public holiday, giving him an extra 48 hours before anyone would start looking.

In February, he was told he would be sent to the front. “I understood, that’s it. I can’t refuse. They are sending me [to war]. If I refuse, they send me to prison. If I go to prison, I’ll be sent to the Wagner Group. There is no way out,” he told me.

Tourism powwow shows Kashmir has mountain to climb

Bilal Hussain Gulmarg

With its Himalayan peaks, crystal-clear lakes and spectacular meadows, Kashmir has obvious potential to become a world-beating holiday destination.

“It will be on the travel bucket list of global travellers,” boasted Manoj Sinha, the lieutenant governor of Jammu and Kashmir, last week, addressing the most prestigious gathering of foreign visitors in the territory since India’s government seized full control in 2019.

The three-day G20 tourism conference was meant to put the region on the international map. Instead the tight security required and the forced late cancellation of part of the itinerary – a trip to Gulmarg – highlighted the ructions caused by the government’s high-handed approach to the territory, which has included the suspension of local elections and the imposition of central rule from Delhi.

Tanvir Sadiq, chief

spokesman of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, a regional political party, demanded to know, if the region was deemed stable enough to host delegates from around the globe, “Why are the assembly elections not being conducted?”

The mountainous Muslim-majority region has been disputed land since partition in 1947. Under the constitution, the former princely state enjoyed privileges including self-government and a clause that barred non-residents from buying property or voting.

However, Kashmir remained a cause of tension between India and Pakistan, which have fought two wars over it. The area has also endured decades of violent insurgency, funded by Pakistan.

Successive Indian governments failed to bring the area under control, and in 2019 the Hindu nationalist government of Narendra Modi took a momentous step: it unilaterally scrapped the semi-autonomous status of

Jammu and Kashmir and revoked the ban on outsiders buying property in the area. There have been reports of human rights violations.

The Indian government has imposed several other measures, including the deployment of additional troops and the cutting of internet and phone connections. Then, earlier this year, the authorities began bulldozing structures across Jammu and Kashmir to reclaim land that had supposedly been built on illegally. More than 50,000 acres was seized this way.

One of the centres of this land drive was Gulmarg, meaning “meadow of flowers” in Persian, a stunning mountain resort that was meant to be one of the highlights of the G20 tourism event based in Srinagar, 30 miles away. The trip for delegates, scheduled for Tuesday, was cancelled at the last minute because of security concerns linked to the resort’s proximity to Pakistan-controlled Kashmir.

The Gulmarg valley was a holiday destination for the

“No one will invest knowing leases are only 40 years”

aristocracy during the Mughal empire. In the early 17th century the emperor Jahangir collected 21 varieties of wild flower there for his garden. The British developed it as a summer retreat and built one of the world’s highest golf courses nearby in the 19th century. More recently it has become a familiar backdrop in Bollywood films and a ski resort for wealthy Indians.

After independence, fresh land legislation had laid the basis for the construction of hotels, offices and homes across the region. Local investors were sold 99-year leases with the option of an extension. Those deals, viewed as the foundation of the Kashmiri upper middle class, were cancelled by the Modi reforms of 2019.

Under new laws, property owners in Gulmarg, Srinagar and elsewhere face problems renewing their leases and risk being pushed out by richer outsiders. Leasehold land bought by hoteliers for development is likely to plummet in value.

One hotel-owner in

Gulmarg, speaking on condition of anonymity, said: “No business person would invest in creating a world-class facility knowing that his lease is only for 40 years.”

Latif Ahmad Bhat, a former president of the Kashmir Hotel and Restaurant Owners Federation, said: “The hotels in Gulmarg, Pahalgam and other regions will take a major hit as their investments would be lost, rendering them bankrupt and leaving many youth jobless.” He still hoped the conference would convince western countries to relax their travel advice.

Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, from Kunzar, spends his winters pulling wealthy Indian tourists on a sled. He fears the new rules will erode his cultural heritage. Irshad Ahmad, a taxi driver, worries the laws “may lead to displacement of local workers” as outside investors bring in their own.

For now at least the path to becoming one of the world’s top tourist attractions looks as precarious as one of Jammu and Kashmir’s mountain roads.

Cigarette loving Bosnians choke on law that stubs out indoor smoking



Aida Feraget, in a Sarajevo café, says smoking is part of Bosnian identity

Charlotte Eagar Sarajevo

Aida Feraget is fuming. The founder of Bosnia’s pro-smoking campaign, Kusame (“Don’t mess with me”), is in Café FG, a panelled corner of Mitteleuropa, opposite Sarajevo’s central market, drinking coffee and sucking on a cigarette.

“This new smoking ban is a violation of my human rights,” said Feraget, 54, surrounded by middle-aged men, also starting their day with caffeine and nicotine. “I have the right to smoke with my coffee if I want to. It’s part of our national identity.”

Until today, Bosnia and Herzegovnia (BiH) was the last bastion of unrestricted indoor smoking in Europe.

This morning, new anti-indoor smoking legislation comes into force, bringing the country in line with the European Union, which it desperately hopes to join. Smoking, vaping and e-cigarettes are banned in all public enclosed spaces, including cafés, restaurants and bars serving food – and cars containing children.

Owners can be punished with fines of up to 5,000KM, or Bosnian marks, (£2,220) and smokers up to 1,000KM:



4 Raising his arms as a signal of surrender, Ruslan approaches Ukrainian lines. He is now a prisoner of war

Dmitry joined the army last summer following his graduation, having agreed in 2016 to serve after university as a way of securing accommodation in student halls in Moscow.

He recalls mobilised troops being sent to his unit last winter but no one engaged with them or gave them any training before they were sent to war.

“Even the authorities in my unit did nothing with them, they just gave them a tent, a gun and a mat to sleep on and that was that,” he said. Men from the ages of 20 to 60 slept in the grounds of the base, in tents, in mid-winter.

What awaited them was well known to the officers, of whom between ten and 15 had fought near Kharkiv at the start of the war. “They said no one needs to go back there, no one needs it. It’s not at all like they say it is on television,” said Dmitry.

The returning officers, almost all of whom had been wounded, complained of having to loot and steal because no one gave them clothing or food. But according to Dmitry there was little remorse about the effect this would have had on the local population. “They didn’t feel guilty about it. I don’t know why. Maybe because the propaganda machine works so well, the idea that they’re all Nazis and so on, maybe they’re not clever enough to understand simple things.”

Russian forces have committed widely documented war crimes in Ukraine, from the rape and murder of civilians to the summary murders of prisoners of war.

“Soldiers committed crimes there every day,” said Alexander, 25, a lieutenant in a signals regiment who served in southern Ukraine last summer, before deserting. He recalls seeing 12 Ukrainian prisoners of war lead on the side of the road. “They were in a seated position, some were standing but had fallen, all of them had their hands tied behind their back,” he said, “It’s hard to explain my emotions at that time. I felt for them but at that moment my primary task was to survive.”

The glory of dying for Mother Russia is drummed into children at a young age.

Since the Soviet period, schools across the country have devoted “hero desks” at the front of each classroom to a fallen sol-

dier, details of their *podvig* – “great deed” – is written on the wood.

Sitting at a hero desk is a great privilege awarded only to the best students. The death toll from the war in Ukraine is a state secret but the number of desks has been multiplying. “These ‘great deeds’ are of course made up,” said Mikhail Stepanov, a Russian emigré in the US, who is attempting to catalogue the war dead alongside a team of volunteers in Russia who risk imprisonment for helping him.

“I feel terrible when I see this propaganda working among children as young as six or even younger, it reminds me of fascist Germany,” said Stepanov. “If, God forbid, this war drags on for years, then many of these children will go to fight too.”

But the solemn ceremonies for unveiling these new desks, and the social media posts accompanying them, is one of the ways that Stepanov’s team are uncovering the scale of the dead. In the run-up to Victory Day there was a surge in names posted on social media. Stepanov went from cataloguing about 500 deaths a week in January to almost 2,000 a week.

Families of dead soldiers are owed compensation of seven million roubles, around £70,000, a huge sum in rural Russia. But if no corpse returns, no money is paid. There have been reports of incinerators behind the front line cremating piles of bodies.

Even those who receive a coffin, often get them six or seven months after the soldier died: deeply painful for an Orthodox Christian or a Muslim family – for whom a quick burial is customary.

In several weeks, the families of the soldiers who died on the morning of Victory Day will discover they are “missing in action”. But, according to Russian campaigners, they are unlikely to ever receive their remains.

Ruslan has spoken about his wife and daughter since his brush with death. “While there is time I want to tell [them] that I really love them, and that I really want to return to them,” he said.

From the men who died in the trench alongside him though, there was no message home, just silence from the mud outside Bakhmut.

heavy penalties, given the average income is 1,200KM a month and unemployment runs at 29.7 per cent, according to the BiH government.

“About 80 per cent of our customers smoke,” said Dubravko Zanuttini, 60, the barman of Café FG. “Twenty per cent of them vape.” Zanuttini said he smoked ten cigarettes a day (which means at least 15). “I can’t imagine a morning without a cigarette with my coffee. They say it’s bad for your health but my granny died at the age of 88, at the table, with a cigarette in her mouth.”

Bosnia, which has a population of 3.2 million, claims to have the highest percentage of smokers in Europe: 44 per cent of adults and 24 per cent of school children, according to the government – vying with Bulgaria at the top of European smoking rates.

Smoking here has its origins in the coffee house traditions of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires (Bosnia was part of both). But it is also bound up with the country’s heroic war survival myth. Sarajevans boast that throughout the 1,425 days that a Bosnian Serb army laid

siege to the city, the Sarajevo Tobacco Factory (founded in 1880) produced its Drina cigarettes using tobacco smuggled in with essential supplies through the “Salvation tunnel”.

I smoked thousands of cigarettes in Sarajevo while reporting during the war, when smoking seemed the population’s main occupation and happened largely indoors because you might get shot outside. My husband, who was involved in a car accident while driving an aid convoy in 1992, remembers fondly Bosnia’s chain-smoking mini-skirted nurses. “They were like something out of a Carry On film,” he said. No more: from today smoking is also banned in hospitals – which, for the last decade, have had designated smoking areas. Exceptions have been made for prisons, old people’s homes and mental institutes.

Dr Aida Ramic-Catak of Bosnia’s Institute of Public Health thinks that change is overdue. The new rules are “part of our requirement to join the EU”, she said. Bosnia signed the WHO’s framework convention on tobacco control in 2009, and was granted EU candidate status

last year. But EU membership is not her only motivation: “Both my parents died of smoking-related illnesses,” Ramic-Catak said. “Over 1,000 people die every year from lung cancer, out of an average of 29,000 deaths per year.” An article in the BMJ estimates that between 24.4 per cent and 42.8 per cent of all deaths in Bosnia are tobacco-related.

Being the Balkans, there is some wriggle room.

The Republika Srpska, the Serb entity of Bosnia’s divided postwar constitution, is, with typical contrariness, not introducing the ban, so anyone desperate to dine and smoke can drive the few miles to their former enemy.

Younger Bosnians are less likely to smoke and for many of them the new regulations are welcome, particularly those heavily exposed to passive smoking in the hospitality industry.

But for the war generation, the ban reinforces all they have lost: their country is truncated, the economy is small, often their children have fled abroad. They live surrounded by bulging graveyards, burnt-out villages and other inescapable reminders of the conflict.

Louise Callaghan

A win will leave Erdogan in a mire of his own creation



Today, Turkish opposition supporters will drag themselves to the polls with a sense of looming defeat and a fear that they have missed their best chance in decades to take down President Erdogan. But if he wins, as polls predict he will, his, and Turkey’s, troubles may be just beginning.

After 20 years in power, Erdogan comes into the presidential run-off as the clear favourite. Two weeks ago, in the first round, he confounded expectations by narrowly beating Kemal Kilicdaroglu, the greying opposition challenger.

Yet while the president and his party, the AKP, did not lose, as many had predicted, neither did he deliver a resounding win. Despite claims by the opposition of voter fraud, Erdogan achieved the lowest level of support he has mustered in a presidential election. His base, once so devoted, is withering away.

Should he triumph today, he will remain at the helm of a country facing numerous deep crises created largely at his own hands.

Erdogan’s dream is to be the leader of a Muslim nation counted among the world’s great powers. But Turkey is fragile: economically broken, with spiralling inflation and a plunging currency, damaged by February’s earthquakes and torn apart by anger at its four million refugees. The judiciary is gutted and cowed after Erdogan’s purges, illiberalism is rising and the country has no chance of becoming a member of the EU any time soon.

Erdogan’s foreign policy wins, such as negotiating a grain deal with Russia and Ukraine, the expansion of Turkish business into Africa and the sale of Bayraktar drones across the world, play well with his base, but do not provide stability, prosperity and growth at home. Relations with the EU, buoyed after the

“His loyal base, once so devoted, is withering away



Supporters of President Erdogan at a rally last week

earthquake response, are degenerating into their usual antagonistic state, particularly because Erdogan and his supporters believe that western countries backed the opposition in the polls.

If elected, Erdogan will probably continue to frustrate Sweden’s attempts to join Nato – using his veto to block its accession. Erdogan has demanded that Stockholm hand over 120 Turkish citizens he classifies as “terrorists”, while refusing to extradite a Swedish-Turkish alleged drug kingpin living in Anatolia, where police say he continues to control drug sales and order killings back home.

In Syria, Turkey has established control over parts of the north by launching a series of invasions. But Turkey’s sworn enemies, the Syrian Kurds, still hold a huge stretch along Turkey’s southern border, imperilling its national security.

The economy is in alarming decline. Prices of ordinary goods have spiralled out of reach for many. Middle-class families have had to slash spending; some of the poor are going hungry. Erdogan, however, has pledged to keep lowering interest rates after years in which doing so has fuelled double-digit inflation.

Before the election, an AKP insider told me the question was not whether the opposition would win – he thought it was impossible – but whether Erdogan would lose. How far would his followers believe his narrative that despite having governed the country for two decades, all its problems can be blamed on shadowy outside forces ranging from western intelligence to gay people?

Erdogan’s allies started briefing against him. Many believed that the AKP would splinter under pressure. Instead it and its allies, the hardline nationalist MHP, won a comfortable majority.

The president desperately wants another term, during which he would, in

October, see in the centenary of the Turkish Republic. His supporters say that it is only fitting that Turkey’s greatest leader since Ataturk should lead the celebrations. Erdogan wants to be remembered as a great Muslim statesman. Instead, he may be remembered as the leader who pulled Turkey into the 21st century – through remarkable efforts to overhaul its health system and infrastructure – and gave it clout on the world stage, only to cripple the economy and the judiciary, and tighten the grip of illiberalism.

Amid the battle for the presidency, something rotten at the centre of Turkey has oozed into view. It sometimes feels like the only thing that unites this country of some 85 million people is loathing for Syrian refugees. Syrians fear attacks, and they are right to. Shops have been looted and there have been fights and killings that families suspect are racially motivated. Outspoken anti-refugee sentiment is normal among large swathes of Turkish society, and has been for a long time.

But the election, and the idea that Syrians who obtained Turkish citizenship (a minuscule proportion of the electorate) were somehow behind Erdogan’s strong showing in the first round, has given it a far more immediate, nastier edge.

Compared with some of the opposition, Erdogan’s stance on refugees seems remarkably liberal. While he has allied with ultra-nationalists and illegally deported thousands of Syrians, he is, for now at least, couching his policy in terms of following global standards of protection. The old divide between secular and religious Turks is becoming less important as people from across the political spectrum move instead to increasingly hardline forms of nationalism.

With this at stake, Turkey’s future looks exceedingly bleak, whoever triumphs today.

Return of Hollywood party king raises question: when did stars get so small?

ARNOLD JEROCKI/AIR MAIL LLC/GETTY IMAGES



Martin Scorsese and Leonardo DiCaprio outclassed today’s stars at Graydon Carter’s Cannes after-party. The sparkling guestlist included Scarlett Johansson

“When an authentic movie star walks in, things stop. Heads swivel

new film together, *Killers of the Flower Moon*, they greeted Carter, rather than the other way around. Other film star guests included Scarlett Johansson and her writer husband, Colin Jost, Rebel Wilson, Paul Dano and Lily Rose Depp, plus the director Oliver Stone. Monaco’s royal siblings, Charlotte and Pierre Casiraghi, were there; so was the billionaire Sir Len Blavatnik, Brits Daphne Guinness and Boy George, the French photographer Brigitte Lacombe and Ruth Rogers, founder and owner of London’s River Café.

Carter touches were everywhere: beautifully branded ashtrays, matchboxes (in the dining room, to much consternation from some) and lampshades printed with black and white movie reels bearing the logo of the successful weekly online newsletter, Air Mail, that Carter founded in 2019 and which features the distinctive blend of robust, glamorous and mischievous

journalism that defined his editorship at Vanity Fair. There was no red carpet and the floral displays were understated. The emphasis was on elegant simplicity, albeit of the spectacularly expensive kind.

For one night only the financial struggles of the film industry almost faded into the background. But Scorsese, 80, De Niro, 79, and DiCaprio, 48, were being fawned over like gods and the excitement surrounding their presence drew attention to the elephant in the room. The question constantly being whispered about during the festival was: why do the celebrities of today seem so small next to the magnetic stars of older generations?

One octogenarian American billionaire summed it up at dinner, asking: “Jesus, what the hell has happened to the movie business?”

Explanations for the demise of the old-fashioned Hollywood star include the rise of TV, social media and

streaming, the decline of cinemagoing and the primacy of effects-heavy superhero epics over blockbusters. Not to mention the erosion of movie star mystique that comes with every member of the public carrying a smartphone camera.

“We are now so familiar with actors via the press and social media I’m not sure it creates the allure of old-style movie stars any more,” said Josh Berger, a London-based film producer. “We probably know too much about them.”

I asked Carter what he made of it all. “You can stuff a room with chattering influencers and fashion victims all you want,” he said, archly. “When an authentic movie star walks into that same room, things tend to stop. Heads swivel.”

Later at the outdoor after-party perched above the swimming pool on the rock, more guests arrived: the model and beauty entrepreneur Rosie Huntington-Whiteley with her actor partner, Jason Statham, who stars in the recently released *Fast X*, as well as Sting and his wife Trudie Styler.

There was a bit of a commotion when an entourage made its way to the VIP section where the trinity was holding court (De Niro with his new wife, DiCaprio with his mother and stepfather and Scorsese with what looked like his entire extended family). It was the Chinese actress, Fan Bingbing, her eyes watchful. The festival marked her return to the spotlight after months under house arrest (with no phone, pen or paper, apparently) for alleged tax evasion.

Later DiCaprio stood up and looked over to someone nearby, who handed him a blue baseball cap. He pulled it down low over his face. Then he nodded to security, who walked him out.

I thought: Who are you trying to kid, Leonardo? I would have recognised that pigeon-toed lope of yours even if you’d been wearing a mask. Carter is right. The last of the authentic movie stars are still out there, and however much they try to avoid it they are still making heads swivel.

Tech guru with the tools to rewire Trump’s base

Vivek Ramaswamy is a long shot for the Republican nomination but he has the patter, the money and the frontrunner’s blessing — and he is striking a chord

Alistair Dawber Cedar Rapids, Iowa

For a nanosecond the millennial self-made millionaire running to be the next president of the United States looks as though he might have to suppress a laugh.

Vivek Ramaswamy, 37, has just been asked by a prospective voter whether he agrees that the “Antichrist will use the climate hoax as a platform to usher themselves into the world?”

A few months ago the biotech entrepreneur had no track record as a politician. Now he is handling difficult questions like a seasoned veteran, both in his frequent television appearances and on the campaign trail.

The climate issue “is a core focus”, he replies earnestly to the 50 or so largely white middle-aged people that have come to hear him speak in a small town in Iowa, the first state to pick a Republican nominee next year. He adds: “I’ll tell you why.” He cares about “truth”, Ramaswamy says, which earns him an enthusiastic round of applause. He disagrees with most of President Biden’s green policies and thinks climate activism is an unwanted “woke” obsession, an issue that he has written a bestselling book about.

Confident, unflappable and strikingly articulate even without notes, he tells his small audience in a sports bar in Cedar Rapids that he is the future of both the party and the country.

There are a few rival claimants for that status, but all are facing headwinds of one sort or another.

On the Democrat side Biden, 80, is attempting to defy his age and historically low approval ratings to win a second term.

Among the Republicans only Donald Trump, 76, is in a strong position in the polls, with more than 50 per cent support from potential primary voters. But he is also uniquely polarising and facing numerous court cases that could blow his campaign off course.

Ron DeSantis, the Florida governor who expected to be Trump’s most formidable rival in the party, suffered a disastrous start to his official campaign last week when the launch event, held on Twitter, collapsed into chaos because of technical problems. Less than six months after he led Trump in a theoretical head-to-head, DeSantis, 44, musters an average of barely 20 per cent of the Republican vote.

Like the others who are already in the race or expected to declare soon (including Nikki Haley, the former US ambassa-

dor to the United Nations; Tim Scott, the South Carolina senator; Asa Hutchinson, the former Arkansas governor; and Mike Pence, Trump’s former vice-president) Ramaswamy is in single digits. But unlike most of his rivals, his support is rising.

“He’s a long-shot candidate but he’s striking a chord with the base of the Republican party on a number of key issues and people like what he’s saying,” said Ryan Williams, a Republican strategist and former adviser to 2012 Republican presidential candidate, Mitt Romney. “He’s young, he’s forceful. He’s not your typical Republican candidate, certainly, and I think people like him.

“Is he in a strong position to win the nomination? No. But quite frankly, nobody is besides Donald Trump at this point. He’s running a credible campaign. He’s got a very pointed message.”

Born and raised in Ohio to parents who moved to the US from India, Ramaswamy developed his political pitch while writing *Woke Inc: Inside Corporate America’s Social Justice Scam*, which became a Sunday Times Business Book of the Year in 2021 and made the case that businesses should be free to make money without political interference.

Specifically, he argued that investing in green projects was not the role of business unless it maximised returns for shareholders. Similarly, targets on staff diversity could damage corporations, he said. Instead, hard work should be rewarded and his America would be brimming with confidence.

Ramaswamy’s parents arrived in the US before he was born. He went to a Jesuit high school in Cincinnati, where he became a national-level tennis player.

In 2007 he graduated from Harvard with a degree in biology, before he received a law degree from Yale in 2013.

During his studies Ramaswamy founded his first business, Campus Venture Network, a technology company, which he later sold.

In 2014, he founded the pharmaceutical company, Roivant Sciences, which applies technology to drug development. He served as chief executive until 2021 and is believed to be worth about \$630 million.

He is married to Apoorva Tewari, who was a medical student at Yale, and the couple have two young children. He is a Hindu and would become the first non-Christian president of the US if he won.

The Washington Post columnist Megan McArdle wrote on Friday that Ramaswamy should be attractive to Trump supporters because he offers the same attributes that kick-started the former president’s political journey, but

“Trump was telling people he was their vengeance and grievance. I don’t think that’s my message

brings none of the toxicity that alienates so many others. Ramaswamy expands on his philosophy in Cedar Rapids, where he complains that his generation was “taught to celebrate our diversity and our differences so much that we forgot all of the ways we really are just the same”. But it was the dream of a nation bound by a common set of values that won the American War of Independence, two world wars and the Cold War, he adds.

“If we can revive that dream over group identity and grievance and victimhood, then nobody in the world ... is going to defeat us.”

Later as he is walking across town, I ask him about abortion, a fundamental divide in American politics today.

“Here’s where I am. I’m running for US president and you heard me say in there that there’s a role for everyone in the system. It’s an issue for the states and I’m against a federal ban on constitutional principles.”

In practice, that means that he supports the Supreme Court’s decision last year to overturn the national ban on anti-abortion legislation – effectively rendering abortion illegal in much of the country.

What about his perceived similarity to Trump?

“My policy agenda is very similar to Trump’s – that’s true, but the message is fundamentally different,” he insisted. “Trump literally launched his campaign telling people that he was their vengeance and their grievance. I don’t think that’s my message.”

One message that has cut through is Ramaswamy’s policy, which is perhaps unusual for a millennial candidate, that the voting age should be raised to 25 unless a person has served in the military or passes a civics test.

He argues that the “absence of national pride is a serious threat to the future of our country” and that his idea “can create a sense of shared purpose

and responsibility amongst young Americans to become educated citizens”.

The proposal made headlines but at best it has shifted the polls only marginally in his direction. Ramaswamy registers between 4 and 6 per cent of support in most surveys.

It may be why Trump has been uncharacteristically generous towards his rival. “I am pleased to see that Vivek Ramaswamy is doing so well in the most recent Republican Primary Poll,” he said earlier this month in a post on Truth Social, his social-media platform.

“He is tied with Mike Pence [the former vice president], and seems to be on his way to catching Ron DeSantimonious,” Trump’s nickname for the Florida governor. “The thing I like about Vivek is that he only has good things to say about President Trump and all that the Trump Administration has so successfully done – this is the reason he is doing so well.”

Were Ramaswamy to grow into a genuine rival to Trump in the coming months, that tone would surely change. But for now the upstart candidate is focused on keeping his campaign alive until the first Republican debate in August. “We’re tied for third in most of the recent national polls but it doesn’t matter relative to the actual debates,” he said.

“Whoever’s been ahead at this point [in past elections] every time, has never been the person who prevails,” Ramaswamy added. “We’re doing better, earlier than I expected to”.



If indoor parties are hampering your style, call in the picnic makers

Will Pavia New York

At 8am on a cool bright New York day, Annie Seddington marched into a riverside park and began setting up a picnic.

Seddington surveyed the ground like a general planning a battle, as two young men shouldered huge black bags full of cushions and brought rugs, small tables and outdoor games. Then she picked a spot and they went to work.

Seddington, 31, is a professional picnic maker, part of an industry that has sprung up in cities across the

US. A former landscape architect from Arizona, she moved into picnics in 2021, founding a company called PikNYC.

The pandemic had closed restaurants, and birthday parties and celebrations were moving outdoors. Social media filled with images of low tables in Central Park, laid with cakes on stands and towers of macaroons, steadily raising expectations of what was required from a picnic.

“It’s very instagrammable,” said Seddington. Her first clients were a couple who wanted to have one beside

the Hudson River. “It was an anniversary picnic. They wanted red colours.”

Sarah Rojas and her husband also got into picnics during the pandemic, when “everybody had a lot of time on their hands”. Their first was in a park in Queens, where they laid out “real plates and dinnerware and silverware” on a patterned carpet. Passers-by stopped to stare and their daughter handed out business cards bearing the name of their operation, Bohemian Picnics.

Erika Henningsen, 30, a Broadway actress who lives

on the Upper West Side, remembers seeing professional picnics pop up while jogging in Central Park. “If you did the six-mile loop of the park, you would see at least four,” she said. She and her fiancé had a Pop-Up Picnic NYC spread for 65 to celebrate their engagement. “What was so special”, she recalled, was that it “felt sort of secluded but you are watching people walk by”.

Most professional picnic makers charge about \$60 to \$100 a person. Many serve food and arrange a musician, photographer or a magician.

Some provide heated tents or string quartets. But the weather is the great unknown. At Rojas’s first gig for a corporate client it started pouring and they moved the picnic under the trees, where, busy finishing a bouquet of flowers, she cut her finger. “I was bleeding profusely,” she said. “We were trying to clean and dry up the plates. It was horrible.”

Seddington’s picnic was for the executives of a foundation in midtown Manhattan. An advanced team arrived shortly after 8am to check

everything was in order. Then disaster struck: sprinklers had come on and were dousing the rugs. Seddington and her workers hurried to haul it all away to a patch of sunny grass.

Then a park official arrived. “Guys? You all got a permit for this?” They did. “I would have shut it off last night,” he said. “Nobody told me nothing.” He wandered away to turn the water off. Seddington dried the plates and wiped down the tables and started setting up again. Before the first executives arrived, it was all ready.



Annie Seddington’s picnics are “very instagrammable”

T BOOKS

Our online bookshop is now open

Shop over 350,000 titles with recommendations from our literary experts.

Visit timesbookshop.co.uk or scan the QR code

20% OFF + FREE DELIVERY

TIMES+ members only

mytimesplus.co.uk

T TIMES Bookshop

NEWS REVIEW

●Must my child have a Covid jab?

●Can you make my son call me?

●Help me get my daughter back!

Emily has just been told that her nine-month-old baby will be returned to her within the next 90 minutes. Her daughter had been taken away for an approved overnight weekend stay with the girl’s father, Ben, and eight days later he had still not brought her back. Emily has been forced to come to court to get her returned. Ben is not here. He appears on a video screen from his home. Their daughter is out of sight.

This is the previously unseen world of the family courts, where 54,000 disputes a year are heard, parents at odds over the custody and upbringing of their children. It is the first time cases such as this have become public, although identities must still be kept confidential.

Emily holds it together as the judge orders her daughter to be returned home “forthwith”.

Ben had argued he had not been allowed to see his daughter for four weeks and said “if I dropped her off, I would never get her back”. He is told by the judge that, if he returns his daughter immediately, he may collect her for an overnight stay next weekend, as normal. A prohibited steps order is put in place to stop the child being removed from the mother’s care again. If it happens, Ben could be fined or even sent to prison.

As Emily leaves the courtroom, she begins to sob uncontrollably, tears streaming down her cheeks and chin and onto her red floral dress. “It’s been so cruel,” she gasps outside. “I have nurtured her and cared for her since she was born. He’s been in and out of her life, and then he took her and I couldn’t get her back. I didn’t know they could do that.” She will have to come back to court, though: a final decision about access will be made later.

The courts have opened up as a result of accusations that unjust decisions are being made in secret. Now, as part of a year-long pilot in Cardiff, Carlisle and Leeds, these fraught and complex cases can be reported, although the identities of the children must be kept private.

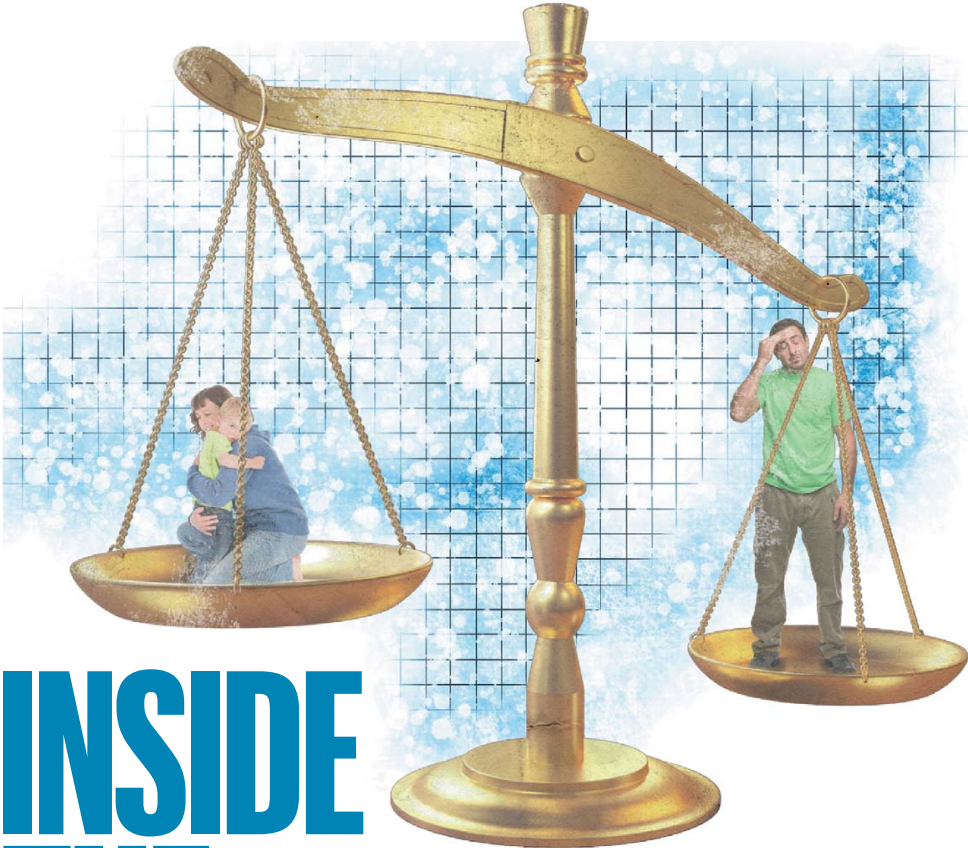
I am spending a week inside Leeds Combined Court Centre, which also hears serious criminal cases. That is why parents must empty their bags, walk through scanners and drink from any water bottles they bring in to prove it isn’t a more harmful substance.

One day, my handbag was upturned and shaken into a tray. On another, I had a stapler confiscated. Security guards say that one week they confiscated a dozen knives, so they cannot be too vigilant.

Once inside, parents sit on black leather chairs in a windowless waiting room. They keep their distance, often sitting around the corner from one another. Separated parents make private applications to the family courts when negotiation and formal mediation fails.

Many hearings are held in the large, formal courtrooms; others are held in cramped offices with four chairs in front of the judge’s desk.

Emotions run high and justice is slow. Courts are bogged down by a shortage of social workers, and by judges being asked to intervene in matters that would normally be negotiated privately between parents. While some parents apply for



INSIDE THE FAMILY COURT

A pilot scheme is allowing a rare glimpse into what has been a closed world. *Louise Eccles* spends a week watching the struggles that play out between parents

tion? This would require a separate specific issues order.

Naomi then asked whether her daughter could be encouraged to have a bat mitzvah. “I am not forcing her to do it,” Alex replied. “I did encourage her to do it but she doesn’t want to.”

The judge had heard enough. “I would try to discuss it and work it out yourselves,” she said. “Coming to court has to be a last resort. I would encourage as many people as possible to do as much mediation as possible or sometimes you will have to live with decisions made by the court that you are not happy with.”

“I have lived with a lot of those recently, to be honest,” said Naomi, as she was granted two evenings a week with her children “subject to the children wanting to attend”.

Maria Coster, a partner at Stowe Family Law in Sheffield and a family law specialist for 11 years, said it could be difficult for separated parents to cope with their lack of control over their child’s lives.

She said: “I have known parents make lists of food and drinks the child cannot have when they’re with the other parent, but if it won’t put the child at risk of harm then I have to say, ‘Look, we are not going to say that giving them Pom-Bear crisps is a reason why the time [with the child] should be limited’.”

Most parents pay court costs themselves. Bringing a private application to the family courts costs £232 but the bill can run into tens of thousands of pounds once solicitors are involved. Those who cannot afford to pay must often accept their unhappy custody arrangements or represent themselves.

Since legal aid was cut ten years ago, means-tested help is now available only to victims of domestic abuse, who may be asked to provide evidence, such as police, bank or medical records, of their situation. Parents can no longer receive help with legal fees for divorce and child arrangements.

In one case in Leeds, a mother told the court that she had been forced to stop using a solicitor because of the cost and was now representing herself. The father, who was applying for contact with the children, had a solicitor. She said: “Like many other families in Britain, I am struggling to put food on the table, hence why I am not represented today.”

The proportion of cases where both parties had legal representation fell from 41 per cent in 2013 to 18 per cent in the last three months of 2022. Parents often find themselves wading through legislation, lodging court applications and writing statements on their own or with the help of charities.

Parents rarely bicker in court – most cases are conducted quietly. There is no jury or public gallery, so rooms always feel strangely empty.

Details of the case do not need to be explained aloud by prosecutors and so are often referred to only as paragraph numbers in bundles of medical records, statements, police records, expert opinion and social worker reports on the judge’s computer screen.

Under the pilot scheme, a judge must consider issuing a transparency order in each hearing attended by a journalist, enabling them to report on what they see

and hear. If a judge decides to permit the journalist to report all or part of the case, anonymously, the parents can object but must have a good reason for doing so, and the judge will balance their concerns against the aim of the pilot: to make the family court a more open and better-understood system.

If solicitors or social workers are present, they do almost all of the talking. Even if people represent themselves, they are not always asked to speak and judges refer closely to the documents in front of them, narrating the findings and their thought process aloud. The calmness of the process is at odds with the emotion of the parents, who chew their sleeves, wipe away silent tears and bite their nails. Parents should not directly address one another. “Interrupting the children’s mother is a very serious matter,” one father was told by District Judge Gordon Lingard when he tried to contradict evidence. “One more [time] and it’s a red card and you’re out.”

District Judge Jillian Bell had straight-talking words for another father, Oliver, who was seeking more contact with his five-year-old son. The court agreed to grant him access every other weekend but, before the order had been rubber-stamped, Oliver asked whether the times and days could be flexible as he had a newborn baby and other commitments.

“I have two holidays booked,” he went on. “If I am going to miss that weekend because I am away, is that fine for me to move that weekend and have two weekends in a row?” “Your ability to have flexibility for yourself is not my concern,” said Judge Bell.

More than half of the mothers who appear were victims of domestic abuse and on low incomes and were entitled to legal aid. Campaigners for fathers allege some men are being accused falsely so mothers can secure a “blank cheque” for their legal costs.

Initiating court proceedings can in itself be a form of abuse, according to Caron Kipping, a divorce coach. She said: “I have known abusers object to a change of school because it adds five minutes to their travel time ... and [refuse] immunisations even when they know the child [who is of an age to consent] is in agreement. The victim is forced to collate lots of evidence, spend all their time preparing for court and left feeling sick and stressed to prove their case instead of being able to move on with their life.”

And the hearings throw up surprises.

In one, a mother, Sophie, attended court while the father, Luke, spoke via video link. Sophie was seeking permission to move more than 200 miles away with her toddler – something normally permitted within UK borders – while Luke wanted the child to have his last name, double-barrelled, and to be given fixed times to spend time with him.

Yet while being asked about his ability to afford certain legal costs on his professional salary, Luke mentions he also has a 12-year-old child, whom he must also support financially. This was news to Sophie, who gasps.

Judge Lingard said: “Eyebrows have been raised here. As far as we are aware, you have previously indicated you have no other children. I rate you as an intelligent man but I find the [late] disclosure of another child not to be helpful, to put it mildly.” He said the parents’ statements to the courts were “diametrically opposed to each other” and urged them to take up mediation.

“If matters can be agreed between the two of you with a certain amount of give and take on both sides, that is very much in the interests of this little boy,” he added. “Unfortunately, if it goes to a hearing then someone is going to feel they have won and someone is going to feel they have lost. It is the responsibility of both parents to work in the best interest of the child. In English family law the children have rights and the parents have responsibilities.”

All names of parents and children have been changed

Tina’s comeback began in the UK and it blew the paint off the walls

After leaving Ike, the singer, who died last week, found a unique style and a new lease of life. *Jonathan Dean* meets the British couple who helped her do it

In 1978, the leading British concert promoter Barrie Marshall took a call from the US, asking: “Would you be interested in promoting a show with this lady, Tina Turner?” Her team wanted her to do one gig, her first in the UK. It was the year she finalised her divorce from her abusive first husband, Ike. Marshall suggested the Hammersmith Odeon, and the gig, he recalls “blew us away. There was no paint left on the walls, the show was so hot. Those were the early days of Tina.”

A year later, Turner, then 39, was back in the UK, playing a gig in Manchester promoted by Marshall and his wife, Jenny, who have worked with Sir Paul McCartney and Sir Elton John.

“An hour before Tina was due to come on stage,” says Marshall, “she came down

some stairs with her white gloves on and said, “Do you allow artists to appear in places that aren’t clean?” I said, ‘No! Never!’ She opened her hand and said, “These were white. What colour are they now?” Jenny laughs, adding: “So we called her White Glove, and she remained White Glove and our great, great friend until she passed away.”

Turner died last Wednesday, aged 83, at the home in Switzerland she shared with second husband, Erwin Bach. Born Anna Mae Bullock in Tennessee, she went on to have a staggering career. She met Ike when she was 17, marrying him in 1962, and their first single, *A Fool In Love*, came out in 1960. By 1966 and Phil Spector’s Wall of Sound production work on *River Deep – Mountain High*, the Turners became

unstoppable: supporting the Rolling Stones and releasing their biggest hit, *Proud Mary*.

The full extent of the abuse she endured at Ike’s hands would become clear only after they split up. He threw hot coffee at her and even beat her while she was pregnant – they raised four sons, three from previous relationships. In 1968, she tried to kill herself. “I was living a life of death. I didn’t exist,” she said. “But I survived it.”

Without him, she thrived. She had solo hits including *Private Dancer*, *The Best* and *What’s Love Got to Do With It*. She combined genres in a manner comparable to Mick Jagger and Keith Richards and inspired a new generation of female singers. Beyoncé, who sang *Proud Mary* with Turner at the Grammys in 2008, paid tribute to her last week, saying: “I’m so grateful for your inspiration, and all the ways that you’ve paved the way.” At a concert on Thursday, Lizzo, who is co-headlining Glastonbury next month, said: “There wouldn’t

be no rock’n’roll without Tina Turner! As a black girl in a rock band, I would not exist if it were not for the Queen of Rock’n’Roll.”

After the demise of Turner’s partnership with Ike, her second career really found its footing in Britain. “London is dear to my heart as it’s the place where the UK fans gave me my first break as

Tina Turner with Margaret Thatcher at the 2005 Women of the Year awards



a solo performer,” she once said. Helped by the Marshalls and her longtime manager, Roger Davies, Turner changed her clothes, hair and entire style to take on, and conquer, the world.

Turner used her split from Ike as an opportunity for reinvention, Jenny says. “She is a woman full of soul, but her heart is rock’n’roll. She adored rock and she was tired of what she’d been asked to do for the start of her career. Once she became a solo artist, she felt she had the right to say and do what she wanted.” In the US, music was put into boxes, while in the UK she felt a lot of freedom, according to the Marshalls. “She became very successful here and then in Europe, and that was a springboard to having success in America again. I think she felt quite European. David Bowie was a huge supporter. She adored Jagger. British music was a motivation for her.”

The Marshalls recall early shows, in small venues, where she would need a quick-change dressing room, so they made something makeshift out of a box. The lighting guys had a bird’s eye view of the singer, though, so Jenny’s mother made a fabric cover to put on top of it.

“But she never made a fuss about anything,” says Jenny.



Turner in 1983 with promoters Barrie and Jenny Marshall

“She did a tour when she broke her little toe, but still had 6in stilettos on. She cut the toe of the shoe out.” Off stage, Turner was quiet. “She loved the rain. Though she sang that she couldn’t stand the rain, she liked the peace of it. She was a real lady. She dressed with great elegance away from the stage, and she was funny too.”

Broke after her divorce, the singer finally found her way out of debt in 1983, but still did not have a credit card. Jenny recalls a time in Milan when they headed out with the promoter’s Amex card, because the star had not been allowed one.

“And we went to all these shops and I’m not very tall and, at that time, Tina’s hair was huge,” says Jenny. “So we looked interesting walking around Milan. She was very real.” “And,” adds her husband, “she could shop.”

The couple remained close to Turner as did the rest of the team she created on tour from 1987. In 2005, Turner was invited to London’s Guildhall, for the Women of the Year awards and Jenny went with her. Men were not allowed in and Jenny got a call in the car to say Margaret Thatcher would be there. She told Turner and the singer said, “What? The first woman

prime minister? Fantastic!” They had their photo taken together.

The Marshalls last saw her in 2019, just before the pandemic, visiting her at her home near Zurich. “We had a lovely afternoon,” says Jenny. “We laughed. We were always laughing when we saw her. It was a joy. But she hadn’t been so well, so we’ve probably spoken to Erwin a bit more recently. But we sent her many photographs and letters and memories. We have so many of them.”

Just before Turner’s 50th birthday, Jenny recalls reminding her she had a big birthday coming up. “She said, ‘Yep! I know what I’ve done with the first half of my life – let’s see what I’m going to do with the second.’ I thought that her eternal positivity was great. I wish she’d made it to 100.”

“It has been a shock,” says Barrie Marshall of her death. “Very sad,” adds his wife. They want to celebrate their friend’s life. In Turner’s last interview, a quick Q&A last month, she was asked how she would like to be remembered. “As the Queen of Rock’n’Roll,” she said. And what scared her about getting older? “Nothing. This is life’s full adventure and I embrace every day with what it brings.”

How my grandmother kept my father alive in Stalin’s Siberia

As dictators carved up Poland, *Daniel Finkelstein’s* family were sent as slave labourers to a freezing Soviet collective farm

BOOK EXTRACT

My father, Ludwik, was born in Lwow, Poland, the only child of a prosperous Jewish family. In 1940, after Hitler and Stalin carved up the country, confiscating land, property and businesses, Ludwik’s father, Dolu, was arrested. Ludwik was rounded up with his mother, Lusia, and they were sent as slave labourers to a Soviet collective farm in Siberia. Ludwik was ten.

The moment the train pulled out of Lwow was a terrible one. There were around 1,100 people spread among 16 wagons, and the wailing of children and lamentations of old people could be heard from every carriage. There was almost no light, almost no air, barely enough space to lie down. There were lice everywhere. People relieved themselves in the hole in the middle of the truck near where others slept. Some didn’t make it all the way to the hole before relieving themselves.

Occasionally the train would stop, and a meagre bread ration would be distributed. Everyone was suffering from terrible thirst, and many were dying. At stops in larger towns, families might pass the body of a mother, or of a child, out of a wagon, and then the train would move on, leaving the corpse by the tracks.

The worst thing about the stops was that it meant there would be starts, for these often jolted the train, throwing passengers from one end of the truck to the other, falling over each other in the dark. So it went on. Stops and starts. Darkness and despair. Hurling towards who knew where. For three long weeks, transported like animals.

And then, at long last, the train came to a final halt. The passengers climbed out, blinking, into the light. They were in a place called Zhangiztobe. It was in eastern Kazakhstan, the Siberian borderlands. And before they were moved on, they were treated to a little speech about their newly acquired status and how they must leave behind middle-class pretension. “You are now the new workers and your job is to accommodate yourself to the old workers.”

Then the group was divided into sections to be taken up country. The first leg took a day by lorry, travelling to Vorontsovka, a further 700km to the north. There they were divided again as they were allocated places to work in the area. My grandmother Lusia and father Ludwik were left as the only two Jews, and Ludwik the only child, among 90 Poles, and spent a further day – now in the heat of May, thirsty, hungry, scared – travelling in ox wagons to their new home. The place where the group were told they would now live. The place where many of them would now die.

Lusia looked out upon the steppes. She could see there was no escape. There was nowhere to go, and no way of going there. She knew that whatever the Soviets were about to force her to do, she had only one real job. She had seen the children fall ill in the cattle truck, seen their bodies left behind as the train trundled on. She would not let that happen to Ludwik. She would struggle and fight and never give in. She would deliver their precious boy, the boy it had been so hard for them to have, back to her husband Dolu whom she had last seen the night he was arrested on April 10, 1940, and had no idea if he was alive or dead.

Lusia would later call the ranch to

which they had been sent “an island of hunger and death”.

Lusia’s job was to make adobe bricks out of cow dung. This involved collecting the dung, mixing the dung with water and clay, forming it into bricks for building or heating, then drying and storing the dung bricks. This task, hour after hour, day after day.

The reward was to be hungry and homeless. In these early days, they were almost entirely dependent on a small ration of unsieved flour, which they were given as wages. From the flour, under the tutelage of the locals, they could make a sort of unleavened pita bread. Whether it was the dung or the flour, Ludwik soon developed bad mouth ulcers.

At night, they retreated to a cowshed. The village in which the farm was situated was home to 120 Kazakhs, and the farm had only five buildings. Now there were 90 Poles to accommodate, and nowhere to put them. Since at that time of year the cows were out to pasture, the obvious place for Lusia and Ludwik to live was in their shed.

For the rest of her life, Lusia kept the secret of her survival in Siberia, and that of my father, in a small plastic bag. I found it only many years after her death. The bag contained a collection of tattered pieces of paper, filled to the edges with scribbled messages in Polish. Every one of them a letter. Perhaps the only important difference between Lusia’s deportation and a prison sentence was that the Finkelsteins, as free Soviet citizens, could send and receive letters and parcels more freely. And this freedom saved their lives.

Shortly after arriving at the state farm, Lusia wrote to her sister, Dorotea, to her favourite brother, Wilhelm, and to her Uncle Nasio. It was the end of May before any of them received her letters. They replied immediately. Over the coming year, between them they would send more than 90 letters. Dorotea’s letter-writing was fuelled by the desperation she felt at her sister’s arrest. She describes herself as being like a “lunatic”, unable to sleep, getting up early in the morning and feeling almost immediately the “first sharp pain of misery”. She understands that her anguish is a burden to her husband and her child, before adding the striking words: “But my love was always greater for you, my sister.”

Together with Wilhelm and Nasio, Lusia’s sister Dorotea began to send parcels of food. These might take a month, or even three months, to arrive, and many never arrived at all. Those that did were vital. In summer, there was little food on the farm; in winter, almost none. Without the parcels, Lusia would later say, “we would have died of hunger”.

On the farm, Lusia, always mentally tough, became a warrior. A certain impiousness, always present in her personality, gave her a natural authority which even the Soviet administrators might bend to. Yet Lusia and Ludwik were often also desperate and miserable. Even with the packages, the hunger, the starvation, was dreadful. At the end of summer the cows had now returned from the fields and reclaimed their lodgings. Lusia was told she would have to build somewhere to live, using the cow-dung bricks she had helped to create in summer.

In winter the snow was so deep it was virtually impossible to go outside, even if it was daylight. And it wasn’t daylight for long, as it became dark at three in the afternoon. The weight of the snow was so great that the entrance porch to Ludwik and Lusia’s hut collapsed, and some men from the farm battled their way to the door to create some sort of opening, a tiny shaft to crawl through. This was



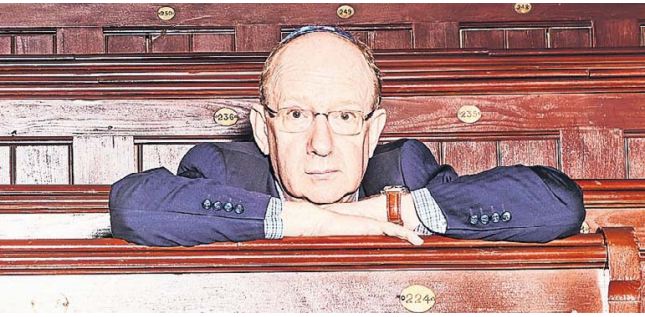
FINKELSTEIN FAMILY COLLECTION; TOM JACKSON



“Lusia had seen the children fall ill in the train, their bodies left behind. She would not let it happen to Ludwik



Daniel Finkelstein today, below, and left, standing, with his father Ludwik in about 1970. Above left, Ludwik and his mother in the early 1950s, and top, as a young boy with Lusia in 1932



needed because once a day someone had to leave the shack to get water.

This job fell to Lusia. She was the only one strong enough to be able to take it on. She had to wear every item of clothing they had in order to be able to withstand the cold. Ludwik would always remember her wearing his coat on her head, as a form of hat. It was, he said, “a terrible expedition”. The snow on the ground was bad enough, but then there were gale-force winds. Some men had made a hole in the ice of the frozen river, and Lusia would have to make her way there, and then, far worse, travel back the considerable distance carrying the water.

When Lusia told Dorotea of these journeys, her sister pleaded with her to stop. She should melt some snow instead. But Dorotea did not realise that – quite apart from the fear that the snow might not be clean – they couldn’t melt snow because they had nothing to melt it with. While it had still been possible to move around the farm, Lusia had obtained fuel by leading a couple of raids on the government stock of cow dung. But once deep winter arrived, such theft went from being imprudent to being impossible. As a result, they couldn’t light a fire. The room in which they were living was below freezing almost all the time. Even if they had flour, they couldn’t cook it.

The other consequence of their limited water supply and lack of fuel was that it was almost impossible to keep clean. Ludwik remembered only washing twice in the entire winter. All five were soon covered in lice. There were no toilets on the farm, even in summer. You had to go in the fields. In winter, they relieved themselves into a tin. Then they would crawl to the hut’s entrance to dispose of it in the snow.

Ludwik, malnourished and freezing cold, became too weak to stand. He lay all day in a wicker basket, covered with whatever clothes they still had, except when Lusia needed the clothes for her water-collecting forays. Yet his mother was determined not to let his mind waste away along with his body. She taught him the Iliad and the Odyssey from memory. She instructed him in the plays of Friedrich Schiller, and sang songs to him. He was to become an exceptional linguist, and Lusia laid the foundations for this in Siberia, in the depths of winter, reinforcing the German he had learnt when a toddler, adding a little English into the mix. Ludwik, always a solemn and diligent child, absorbed what he was taught and would never forget it. Neither would the tight bond he formed in these days with his Mamusia, his Mummy, ever loosen.

Just when it felt as if any more winter would be unendurable, the first signs of spring appeared, and the snow began to recede. Ludwik rose from his bed, crawled out of the entrance to the shack, and promptly collapsed. He was revived with alcohol. He was suffering from vitamin deficiency and was covered in ulcers and boils. These were quite common among the deportees. They were known as “Soviet visas”, and they stayed on Ludwik’s body for years.

My father had barely survived his first winter in Siberia. Many of the others were not so fortunate. Lusia realised that another winter like the one just past and they would surely perish too. At around this time, my father recalls encountering a villager who looked surprised to see him. “Oh, Finkelstein, I thought you had died. Never mind. Maybe next year.” My father was 11 years old. That was the carelessness with which human life was regarded.

The letters from the family were the

“In the early days, they were almost entirely dependent on a small ration of unsieved flour

one source of news from the outside world. And it had to be imparted with care, because the letters might be opened and read by the secret police.

Wishing to encourage Lusia to stay strong, the foreign news being sent is upbeat. The letters repeatedly describe “Gcio” – code for Germany – as being in trouble, while “Ania” – Britain – “has never been as healthy as she is now”. This sort of reassuring message was even included in a letter admitting that “Gcio visited Alusia Gottlieb”: in other words, Germany had invaded the Netherlands and Belgium. The Dunkirk retreat was also glossed over, with Lusia being told that “Ania will take care of everything”.

During the period in exile, the family made many appeals – some in letters sent directly to Stalin – for Lusia and Ludwik to be allowed to move off the farm and to a nearby town. Wilhelm and Dorotea collected doctors’ certificates citing Lusia’s difficulties in childbirth, and Ludwik’s supposed asthma, as reasons to be granted relief. None of these appeals even received a reply. If Soviet rule had continued unchallenged, it is reasonable to assume nothing would have changed for Lusia and Ludwik. As it was, they were saved by a turn in the conflict that the letters do not anticipate. On June 22, 1941, Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa, and invaded the Soviet Union.

A negotiation began. The central issue was the fate of those the Soviets had arrested and imprisoned since they first invaded Poland. The Poles insisted upon their release, and the Soviets eventually agreed. The term used was an “amnesty”, which implied the prisoners had been guilty of a crime and which many Poles justifiably found offensive. But the Soviets were not about to admit to any previous wrongdoing.

In early September 1941, two Soviet police officers arrived at the ranch and asked to speak to Lusia, Ludwik and the other deportees. They were all free to go.

Ludwik and Lusia arrived in a rainy Southampton docks on August 27, 1947. After the amnesty of the Poles, they had joined up with the Polish Free Army and lived in Iran and Palestine, before being allowed to settle in Britain. Ludwik’s experience of living without fuel set him on the path to become an engineer and he became a pioneering measurement scientist. He settled in Hendon, with Lusia living round the corner.

Extracted from Hitler, Stalin, Mum & Dad: A Family Memoir of Miraculous Survival, by Daniel Finkelstein, which is published by William Collins on June 8 at £25. Finkelstein will be in conversation with Hugo Rifkind on the same day. Times and Sunday Times subscribers can register to attend online at mytimesplus.co.uk/events

Tomorrow in The Times: How my mother survived Belsen

No time to consider the climate crisis My private jet is waiting

Business and carbon emissions are booming in the UK, Europe’s capital for luxury air travel. Will anything limit the appeal of a plane of one’s own, asks *Tom Calver*

Like a general moving troops around a map, Rohan Mark Jayawardene is planning a huge logistical operation. “We have 40 movements involving UK airports between Friday and Monday,” says Jayawardene, chief executive of Diamonté Jets, a charter flight company. The stars have aligned and he must move rich passengers from Britain to the Cannes Film Festival and the Monaco Grand Prix, which have overlapped this year. He then has to deliver West Ham fans

to Prague, and Manchester City supporters to Istanbul before the week is out. His standards are high. “We’re big believers in the private element of private aviation,” he says. “Everything is very discreet, and everything is tailor-made.”

Like many private airlines, Jayawardene’s business is booming. Never mind the climate emergency: the private jet has survived – and flourished – as the ultimate status symbol. Even James Cleverly, the foreign secretary, embarked on an eight-day tour of the Caribbean last week in a Succession-style Embraer Lineage 1000E, costing the taxpayer just over £10,000 an hour.

Britain has become the private jet capital of Europe, with more carbon emissions than any other nation, a report found this year. How, in the middle of a climate emergency, have we become so hooked on this form of travel?

To fly is to be free. Harriet Quimby, who in 1912 became the first woman to fly across the English Channel, wrote of her first flying lesson: “I felt as much as a child feels when riding a sled downhill.”

But today, the process of boarding an aircraft is anything but free. Instead it involves a series of confinements – from check-in to security, departure gate, then through hermetically sealed plane doors.

The private jet experience tears up that process. For one thing, the terminals are smaller. At Farnborough airport in Hampshire – the site of Britain’s first powered flight in 1908, and now the busiest private jet airport in Britain – the VIP terminal has a gym and concierge. You drive up, put your bags on a scanner and walk straight through to a lounge. Within 20 minutes, your captain will walk you to your plane.

The super-rich can do away with terminals

altogether. Dr Christopher Williams-Martin, chief executive of FlyElitejets, can get you a limo to the plane’s steps. “Some airports do require entry via the terminal but we can usually get airline clearance for to-jet boarding,” he says. “We pre-clear them for immigration then collect them in a limo and take them directly to the aircraft.”

The obvious reason that private airlines have done so well in Britain – aside from our island geography – is the proliferation of rich people here. For business users, the greatest saving is time.

“The mindset has changed now,” Williams-Martin adds. “Previously, if you had meetings in Europe, you’d spend an extended stay. There would be a tiny bit of

business and a large amount of golf involved. Now people want to get the business done and jet out to be back home with their families.”

This, he says, is a post-Covid thing. Indeed, the recent private jet boom owes a lot to the pandemic. Civilian flights were grounded in 2020 and data from the Eurocontrol aviation organisation shows that charter and business flights were much quicker to recover when flights were allowed to resume in 2021-22. Scheduled flights have still not recovered to their 2019 peak.

“Once you fly private once, you don’t want to go back,” suggests Clive Chalmers, vice-president of the charter team at Air Partner, a company that began as a pilot training



outfit in the 1960s. As well as their regular business clients, Air Partner increasingly deals with one-off bookings – perhaps friends clubbing together for football matches or special celebrations. “There’s not much we haven’t seen,” he says. “We have every request from drinks served at exactly the right temperature to providing McDonald’s or KFC in-flight.”

Which brings us to the cost. For a return journey, from Farnborough to Nice, FlyElitejets’ mobile app offers a propeller-powered Britten-Norman BN-2 Islander at £12,000 for me and up to seven guests. The journey will take 4½ hours.

Another popular route is Luton to Paris, offered by most private airlines for about £5,000 – a price that, split with enough friends, might just be doable in three figures. The trip typically lasts 52 minutes, about 80 minutes shorter than the Eurostar train journey.

Herein lies the embarrassing truth about private jet flights: most of them are short-lived. Of the 134,000 private flights made in the past 12 months, 29 per cent took an hour or less. About 8,000 flights were less

than half an hour door-to-door.

If we think big, it is easy to explain away the carbon emissions of private aviation. Air travel causes 2.5 per cent of all global emissions, with private flights producing 1 per cent of that total. Yet frequent fliers produce an overwhelming majority of air travel’s CO₂ emissions.

On a per-person basis, perhaps the most polluting thing you can do is fly in a private jet. The average private flight leaving a UK airport last year produced about five tonnes of CO₂; the typical European person produces about eight tonnes in an entire year.

The backlash against private jets is under way: Amsterdam’s Schiphol airport has announced it will ban private jets from 2025.

Yet changing attitudes towards climate change have done little to deter celebrity passengers from boasting about private jets. Chalmers is also confident that he can retain the new jetsetters who tried their services during Covid. “There’s a new market for private travel, and we’ve tapped into that,” he insists. “Those passengers will be here to stay.”

NEWS REVIEW

BRYAN JOHNSON/INSTAGRAM



Bryan Johnson injected blood plasma from his 17-year-old son Talmage

Zolman studied medicine at King’s College London, graduating in 2019. A separate degree in regenerative medicine included modules on the biology of ageing and a research project that involved creating blood vessels with collagen and stem cells.

He was still studying when he began attending conferences and meeting rich people who wanted to turn back the clock. Most have been private – he will say only that his first client was “a very high-profile political leader” – but Johnson was different.

The pair met via a contact in 2020, just after Zolman had developed his approach. By separately targeting 81 “organ types”, including the heart, tendons, bladder and rectum, he would use a range of indicators and techniques, including MRI and ultrasound, to give each organ an age.

He could then monitor those relative ages in response to treatments that also include sleep techniques, an exercise regime and a closely controlled diet.

“Bryan was all in. He just said, ‘I want to be your client for the next ten years, here’s an unlimited budget’,” Zolman says. “Project Blueprint” was created to help Johnson try to acquire the physiology of an 18-year-old. By this year, he claimed already to have the lung capacity and fitness of a teenager, the heart of a 37-year-old and the skin of a 28-year-old.

The day before we speak, Zolman and Johnson were discussing a treatment involving microdoses of Botox, to shrink the sebaceous glands in Johnson’s face so his pores reduce their current age of about 35.

Zolman insists he is not motivated by money, but by showing what’s possible. He says he invests everything into research at his small lab in Cambridge. “My income has been, like, £15,000 a year for the past seven years, and I live in the shittiest place and don’t take holidays,” he says.

But he’s playing a longer game, and is now in business with Johnson. There are plans for a clinic in London and a line of anti-ageing powdered food – a kind of Huel for rejuvenation.

Some of the treatments are controversial. One biochemist told Bloomberg that plasma transplants for rejuvenation were “gross, evidence-free and relatively dangerous”.

Richard Siow, the director of the ageing research unit at King’s College London, chooses his words carefully when asked about Zolman’s work. “It’s experimental and involves very few individuals,” he says. “There needs to be a lot more research, and I think it’s important that we focus on what we can all do today. Because it’s not rocket science – we need to get up and walk more and eat more healthily.”

Zolman is aware that his work can seem, well, a bit mad, but he is determined to get it all peer-reviewed in time. And when people laugh at the idea of, say, attaining an 18-year-old rectum, Zolman shoots back: “Rectal cancer is not funny, and if you have an old rectum, you’re going to get cancer.”

Rejuvenation in this area can involve a range of treatments including fibre supplements and surgical polyp removal, Zolman tells me.

As far as possible, he practises what he prescribes. Zolman was at a clinic in Canary Wharf last Wednesday, having salmon sperm DNA injected under his eyes. The unproven treatment, which isn’t yet available in the US, supposedly boosts collagen production to improve skin elasticity without simply masking the effects of ageing.

Zolman says his clients have no interest in trying to live for ever. “That’s more for socially uncalibrated crypto[currency] people,” he says.

If not immortality, then surely vanity is the primary drive for someone like Johnson. Are his giant pecs part of the anti-ageing plan?

“No, it’s completely unnecessary and even counterproductive,” Zolman says before returning to his lab to prepare for his daily call with Johnson. “I’m actually redesigning his exercise protocol to include more rest days.”

Dr Strangeblood’s quest to grow a younger tycoon

Simon Usborne meets the British doctor who, armed with an ‘unlimited’ budget and vials of teenage blood and salmon sperm, is helping one millionaire turn back his body clock



Zolman runs a longevity start-up in Cambridge

When Oliver Zolman was at primary school, he wrote a play and took the part of a mad scientist, turning his two best friends into “Frankenstein-style” monsters, he tells me. Two decades later, he’s helping a tech millionaire roll back the years with injections of blood from the tycoon’s own son, as well as – potentially – the DNA from salmon sperm.

Zolman, a self-possessed 29-year-old doctor and entrepreneur, insists that neither he nor Bryan Johnson, 45, his main client at the longevity start-up he runs in Cambridge, are mad. “I just want to prove that I can reverse the age of an individual’s organs by 25 per cent,” he says.

The unlikely duo – a young Briton who still lives in a shared house and a former Mormon missionary from Utah who in 2013 sold a payments processing company to PayPal for \$800 million (£650 million) – have been in the spotlight in the past week.

Johnson documented his blood-plasma transfusion in a magazine article last Monday about his attempts to reduce his biological age by monitoring every bodily function and habit. Among other things, he takes 100 pills a day and wears a device to count nocturnal erections.

Plasma transfusions have yet to be fully tested in the growing field of rejuvenation therapy. But gruesome experiments in mice, in which animals with an age gap have been stitched together so their blood mingles, have suggested the older mouse benefits.

Johnson received plasma from his son, Talmage, 17, at a clinic in Dallas – and in turn donated a bag to his 70-year-old father. “As fun family activities go, this one is pretty out there,” began the article

“I’m not mad. I just want to prove I can reverse the age of an individual’s organs by 25 per cent

in Bloomberg Businessweek magazine, which went viral.

But it didn’t mention Johnson’s Frankenstein – the young Briton who has been given a reported budget of as much as \$2 million a year to pool new research and the expertise of a team of scientists to prescribe a radical course of treatment.

With an accent that appears to have drifted somewhere west over the Atlantic, Zolman, who speaks to Johnson every day, describes the tycoon as “super-chill. He’s a normal guy who sees himself as a pioneer, funding pioneering research to take society forward.”

Zolman grew up in Cambridge, where his father works as a museum manager. His mother is a former ballet dancer and teacher. Two things fascinated him in the library of his private school: business (he read Richard Branson’s autobiography) and regenerative medicine.

“I learnt about growing new ears on the side of mice, and making frogs grow eyes in their stomachs, or just 3D-printing replacement organs,” he says. “It seemed kind of like a video game.”

THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLERS

GENERAL HARDBACKS		Last week	Weeks in top 10
1	 Ultra-Processed People Chris van Tulleken (Cornerstone Press £22) Investigating the science and economics of highly processed food (4,585)	2	4
2	Unbreakable /Ronnie O’Sullivan (Seven Dials £22) The seven-times world snooker champion on lessons learnt in his career (4,395)	3	2
3	Menopausal /Davina McCall & Naomi Potter (HQ £22) Exploring the science and debunking damaging myths of the menopause (4,165)	16	27
4	I’m Not as Well as I Thought I Was /Ruby Wax (Penguin Life £18.99) An honest account of mental health from the bestselling comedian (2,805)	6	2
5	But What Can I Do? /Alastair Campbell (H Heinemann £22) The former Labour strategist on modern politics and how to fix it (2,785)	1	2
6	Johnson at 10 /Anthony Seldon and Raymond Newell (Atlantic £25) An account of the former prime minister Boris Johnson’s time in power (2,045)	5	3
7	The Future of Geography /Tim Marshall (Elliott & Thompson £20) How the new geopolitical space race could revolutionise life on Earth (1,955)	7	4
8	Why Has Nobody Told Me This Before? Julie Smith (M Joseph £16.99) Clinical psychologist’s advice for navigating life’s ups and downs (1,930)	10	63
9	The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse Charlie Mackesy (Ebury Press £16.99) An illustrated fable containing gentle life philosophy (1,875)	8	176
10	Spare /Prince Harry (Bantam £28) The Duke of Sussex’s experiences as a member of the royal family (1,695)	4	19

GENERAL PAPERBACKS		Last week	Weeks in top 10
1	 Landlines Raynor Winn (Penguin £10.99) Raynor and her husband, Moth, walk from Scotland to the South West Coast Path (4,120)	2	2
2	Diddly Squat: ‘Til the Cows Come Home Jeremy Clarkson (Penguin £9.99) The motorhead on another year at Diddly Squat farm (3,490)	6	2
3	Atomic Habits /James Clear (Random House £17.99) The minuscule changes that can grow into life-altering outcomes (3,010)	4	91
4	The Lost Rainforests of Britain /Guy Shrubsole (Wm Collins £10.99) A quest to discover Britain’s lost rainforests, and bring them back (2,550)	5	3
5	A Pocketful of Happiness /Richard E Grant (Simon & Schuster £9.99) Memoir born from the actor’s late wife’s wish for him to find positives (2,430)	1	2
6	The Mind Manual /Alex George (Aster £20) The TV doctor and youth mental health ambassador shares mental fitness insights (2,095)	3	2
7	Surrounded by Idiots /Thomas Erikson (Vermilion £10.99) How understanding personality types can improve human interaction (1,945)	9	45
8	Abyss /Max Hastings (Wm Collins £10.99) The eminent military historian’s account of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis (1,710)	10	2
9	The Daughter of Auschwitz /Tova Friedman and Malcolm Brabant (Quercus £8.99) One of the youngest people to survive Auschwitz tells her story (1,450)	7	4
10	Nothing But the Truth /The Secret Barrister (Picador £10.99) Stories from life as a practising barrister working in criminal law (1,275)	16	1

FICTION HARDBACKS		Last week	Weeks in top 10
1	 Atlas Lucinda Riley and Harry Whittaker (Macmillan £22) The Seven Sisters saga draws to its conclusion with the story of Pa Salt (12,175)	1	2
2	The Curse of Saints /Kate Dramis (M Joseph £20) A queen’s spymaster teams up with her rival to investigate rumours of dark magic (5,305)	—	1
3	Happy Place /Emily Henry (Viking £14.99) A couple that broke up months ago pretend to still be together in front of friends (4,710)	4	4
4	The Making of Another Major Motion Picture Masterpiece /Tom Hanks (H Heinemann £22) A director tries to adapt a humble comic book (3,700)	2	2
5	Queen Charlotte /Julia Quinn and Shonda Rhimes (Piatkus £22) Bridgerton’s Queen Charlotte and King George III’s great love story (2,395)	3	2
6	The Wedding Planner /Danielle Steel (Macmillan £22) A New York wedding planner juggles personal and professional challenges (2,140)	5	2
7	It Starts With Us /Colleen Hoover (Simon & Schuster £14.99) Sequel to <i>It Ends With Us</i> , revealing Atlas’s side of the story (1,825)	9	31
8	Small Worlds /Caleb Azumah Nelson (Viking £14.99) A family’s relationships are explored across three summers in London and Ghana (1,760)	8	2
9	Fractal Noise /Christopher Paolini (Tor £20) A spaceship crew must explore an unfamiliar planet containing a vast anomalous pit (1,395)	—	1
10	The House of Doors /Tan Twan Eng (Canongate £20) In 1920s Penang, a wife confides in her husband’s old friend, a celebrated novelist (1,205)	—	1

FICTION PAPERBACKS		Last week	Weeks in top 10
1	 The Bullet That Missed Richard Osman (Penguin £9.99) The Thursday Murder Club investigates the death of a journalist ten years ago (44,970)	1	2
2	Picture You Dead /Peter James (Pan £9.99) A collector will stop at nothing to get his hands on a long-lost masterpiece (14,180)	3	2
3	Lessons in Chemistry /Bonnie Garmus (Penguin £9.99) In 1960s America a chemist becomes the star of a TV cooking show (10,155)	4	12
4	The Family Remains /Lisa Jewell (Penguin £9.99) A mudlark’s gruesome discovery is linked to a 30-year-old cold case (8,965)	2	4
5	No Plan B /Lee Child and Andrew Child (Penguin £9.99) The police rule a woman’s death a suicide; Jack Reacher knows it was murder (7,955)	6	8
6	A Mother’s Trust /Dilly Court (Arrow £8.99) A woman discovers a secret about her mother that could tear the family apart (7,630)	10	2
7	Shrines of Gaiety /Kate Atkinson (Penguin £9.99) In London, 1926, a ruthless nightclub owner’s empire comes under threat (7,355)	5	4
8	Again, Rachel /Marian Keyes (Penguin £9.99) Successful and nearing 50, Rachel Walsh’s life is upended by an old flame (6,760)	8	6
9	It Ends With Us /Colleen Hoover (Simon & Schuster £8.99) A first love’s reappearance threatens a woman’s relationship (6,100)	13	89
10	Desert Star /Michael Connelly (Orion £9.99) Renée Ballard and Harry Bosch hunt a psychopath who has haunted Bosch for years (5,950)	7	4

Dam! Not even a nibble on my first wild beaver safari

They have re-engineered the Devon landscape, reduced flooding and brought in the tourists, but the busy beasts won’t surface for *Ben Spencer*

Wait, is that one over there? I peer through the rain, trying to identify a dark smudge against the brown water. Something’s moving our way. Is that a tail? I think I can make out a head.

Ah, I can see it more clearly now: it’s a log.

I’m standing on the edge of a marsh in east Devon looking for beavers. And I’m not having much luck. I hunch over, trying to shelter my notepad from the drizzle. There’s not a beaver in sight.

“Aren’t beavers meant to like water?” I ask Peter Burgess, director of nature recovery at the Devon Wildlife Trust. Burgess replies: “This is pretty extreme, even for a beaver.”

The beavers may be hiding, but this is their home. As a species they are native to England but were hunted to extinction about 400 years ago. Now they are making a comeback, fuelled by a demand for rewilding and the potential to regenerate and re-engineer the landscape.

In 2021 Boris Johnson said he would issue more licences for beaver reintroductions – a policy he labelled “build back beaver”. The environment department and Natural England are drawing up a national framework.

In the meantime enclosed beaver projects have sprung up in Kent, Cornwall, Essex, Derbyshire and Cheshire.

But if you want to see what difference they can make in the wild, east Devon is the place to go. They are the most established wild population of beavers in England, having been here for at least a decade. Beavers mysteriously reappeared in nearby Ottery St Mary about a decade ago. It is not clear how they got there, but it is believed they either escaped from a captive population or were released in an act of “guerrilla rewilding”.

They were immediately popular with locals. Defra gave permission for the

beavers to remain free as long as they were monitored by the Devon Wildlife Trust.

Since then they have thrived. Some 23 families live along the River Otter and its tributaries, and elsewhere in Devon are making headway on the Tamar, the Taw and the Exe. More surprising, perhaps, is the tourism industry that has sprung up.

Several companies offer “beaver safaris” to see the animals. “It’s a really positive example of the sort of sustainable and green tourism we want to see here,” says Hilary Nelson, vice-chairwoman of Sidmouth town council. Shops sell statuettes of beavers; Isca Ales, a brewery in Dawlish, makes a Beaver Bitter.

Today, though, the beavers are staying out of the rising water. At Colaton Raleigh, a few miles away, the Otter has risen by a metre in three hours. Yet the picturesque village of East Budleigh, the birthplace of Sir Walter Raleigh, a few miles from where we are, has been unscathed.

The marshland where we are standing is upstream of the village, on a brook that eventually joins the Otter. Since the beavers arrived here six years ago they have transformed the landscape. “There was no open water here at all,” says Burgess.

Now there is a huge, marshy pond of about an acre. Huge willows lie on their side in the water, with gnawed pencil-sharpener ends, exactly as they look in cartoons. “There are six substantial dams,” says Burgess, and he points out a beaver lodge – a large pile of branches on the water’s edge with a subterranean entrance, where the animals breed and raise their kits.

Elsewhere in the county the downturn of the last few hours has sent water rushing off the hills into rivers which have rapidly risen and burst their banks. But here the beavers’ woody dams have slowed the action.

A 2020 study by Exeter University concluded that the beavers had reduced “peak flows” through East Budleigh, which was previously prone to flooding. “Beavers have created a huge storage area within the floodplain above the village,” the scientists wrote. And this has significant benefits to other wildlife. “A wetland like this is brilliant for biodiversity,” Burgess says.

As the dusk settles, we call it a night. Signs of beavers are everywhere – gnawed trees and nibbled branches line the banks. I console myself that this, alone, is a privilege. It would have been nice to have seen a beaver, though.



The Eurasian beaver population has spread to a number of rivers in Devon

One day we can turn off the North Sea gas taps, but not yet

Sometimes the UK doesn’t bang its own drum loudly enough on climate progress. In the two decades to 2021, carbon emissions fell by 43 per cent, helped in large part by the almost total removal of coal from the power system. But, like it or not, oil and gas continue to provide three quarters of our overall energy mix.

A good proportion is produced in the North Sea. But because of falling production we have, since 2004, been a net importer, exposed to the volatility of the open market. Rocketing fuel prices after Covid and Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine focused minds on energy security – and the trade-offs involved in trying to choke off domestic oil and gas supplies before enough renewables have become available.

Labour’s proposal to ban new North Sea development should be seen in this context. Apparently chasing eco-votes, Sir Keir Starmer is expected to say that a Labour government would not issue any more drilling licences. Talking about turning Britain into a “clean energy superpower” is all very well. But sounding the death knell for the North Sea, where operators are already reeling from windfall taxes and hostile rhetoric from the Scottish National Party, is an economically risky idea that would risk leaving Britain permanently at the mercy of international price fluctuations.

The recent rollercoaster ride of energy bills endured by households and businesses is evidence enough that relying on imported power can be an expensive pastime.

Instead a more nuanced debate is needed on the speed at which we can move to a lower-carbon future. Renewables now account for nearly half the UK’s electricity generation, but they are still making up less than 10 per cent of the total energy mix. The sun doesn’t always shine, and the wind doesn’t always blow. Aggressively phasing out oil and gas without building more nuclear power to replace the lost “baseload” – reliable generation – is a pipe dream. Any serious vision for decarbonising the UK’s energy system must embrace nuclear, and even gas, as well as renewables.

There is another point, which is that the big energy companies Labour would whack with its ban are precisely the ones it would then want help from for its green agenda. Giants such as Shell are not just oil and gas explorers. They are diversifying

into solar, wind, hydrogen and carbon capture and storage projects.

They have been wondering about the UK as a place to invest for several years. Under Nicola Sturgeon the SNP – undoubtedly playing to its Green coalition partners in Holyrood – spoke out against big projects including the Cambo field west of the Shetland Islands. Government agencies such as the Oil and Gas Authority and the Offshore Petroleum Regulator for Environment and Decommissioning have been reluctant to grant approvals.

Windfall taxes, which raise the total rate for North Sea oil and gas to 75 per cent – and offer no investment allowances for renewables – have sent a chill through the industry. Offshore Energies UK, a lobby group, warns that 90 per cent of operators are cutting back their activities. It says £200 billion of investment – including on offshore wind, carbon capture and storage and hydrogen production – is at risk. Jobs are already being lost as firms such as the North Sea specialist Harbour Energy retreat, and thousands more may go.

The present government is far from innocent in this, having brought in the windfall taxes Labour called for and then raised them further. Both sides need to get real. Windfall taxes are strangling the North Sea, and Starmer’s ban would kill it off. Labour says it would allow operators to continue extracting oil and gas from existing projects, but it is fanciful to think they would keep throwing resources into a part of the world with no future.

Until the UK has a new generation of nuclear reactors ready to come into service – which will be many years in the future, if at all – oil and gas will continue to be part of our energy supply. The lessons of energy security learnt the hard way in recent years shouldn’t be forgotten.

Indeed, simply to fulfil any kind of net-zero plan will require new factories, pipelines and turbines to be built – all of which need to be powered through the National Grid.

We report in Business today on the plans for a gigafactory in Somerset – a building set to be one of the largest in Britain. It will produce electric car batteries for decades but require a cost-effective supply of power both to build it and to keep the conveyor belts running.

Cutting off domestic production of oil and gas too soon would simply push up prices and leave the UK more vulnerable when the next crisis comes. By letting ideology trump pragmatism, Labour risks repeating the mistakes of the past.

Over-50s are on board to tackle the classroom crisis

Staff shortages in the classroom have become a common complaint since the end of the pandemic, and in the past year Britain has chalked up some particularly bad numbers for teacher recruitment. Just 28,991 joined the profession, down from 36,159 in 2021-22. But one age group showed growth. The much-maligned over-50s, criticised for leaving the workforce post Covid, have returned to the classroom. The number of teachers aged over 55 rose by 4 per cent. One in five is now over 50.

Schools are facing such a staff crunch that some heads are warning they may have to stop offering certain subjects at A-level because they cannot find the necessary specialists. At the most acute end of the scale, just 17 per cent of the physics

teachers required were recruited last year. Teachers from countries including India and Nigeria are being offered £10,000 “relocation payments” to cover maths, sciences and languages. Deborah Mills, chief executive of the charity Now Teach, is appealing to those who have had high-flying careers to switch to the whiteboard. “It is a crisis, and older career-changers could be a solution,” Mills says.

Teachers who join late in life say they have to put up with jibes such as “dinosaur” and “Santa”. But Richard Lewis, a former banker who turns 70 this week, tells our education editor it’s not so different from dealing with his old City clients: “Overinflated egos, people behaving badly and thinking they can get away with it.” We need more like him.

King Charles the Chilly

Brrr, it’s chilly. Not for most of us, true, as the nation lounges through a glorious bank holiday weekend; but the water babies of Buckingham Palace are apparently shivering. Royal sources say the King has turned down the heating in the palace pool.

His reasons are not known, and insiders speculate it’s to save energy. We suspect it may go further. Charles is known to prefer a bracing wild swim to the tepid indoor variety; at the same time,

it is thought he wants to inject some energy and purpose into the establishment cosiness that pervades the palace’s long corridors. Perhaps the nippy pool is by way of a hint.

Our Scandinavian cousins have long sung the praises of cold-water swimming. They know a moderate shock to the system can work wonders. We encourage all eligible palace staff to dive in: if the monarchy is finally going to become cool, they’ve got to start somewhere.

Dominic Lawson

Dogs and sheep will pay to help MPs look cuddly



Banning e-collars is much more about politics than animal welfare

My favourite dog was Thistle, a black Patterdale-Jack Russell cross. She was a canine Houdini, somehow managing to escape from spaces we thought completely secured. And she would also – I’d never seen this in a dog before then – climb trees in pursuit of squirrels, or just for the joy of it.

Then, one day, I found her in a neighbour’s field. Standing next to a sheep whose throat she had torn open. Grotesquely, the dying sheep was also standing, as if transfixed in shock. Another of Thistle’s victims lay dead beside it. Thistle came up to me, wagging her tail, and putting her paws on my knees in the way she always did. I cried. Then called my neighbour to explain what had happened; and after that the vet, to have Thistle put down.

Since then we have had chihuahuas. In fact they too have a strong prey drive, but exercised only at the expense of mice and rats around the house. The neighbour at the time was reasonably understanding, perhaps because he kept an exotic breed of sheep as a hobby, rather than as a livelihood. But he urged that if we kept terriers in future, we should use e-collars. These are devices that let you give your dog an electric shock, via a handheld remote control, if it is about to harass sheep (or anything else). The dog thereafter has a Pavlovian reaction – associating the sheep with the discomfort – and so becomes permanently wary of approaching them, even if it has escaped from its owner.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of this form of training, and about 500,000 e-collars are now used in the UK. The result is not just that livestock are given a greater degree of protection than would be the case without that device, but that hundreds of thousands of dogs are able to enjoy running off lead in open countryside, when otherwise their owners would not feel able to give them such glorious freedom. And it means that many fewer dogs meet Thistle’s fate.

But that may soon change. Last month the government laid before parliament the Animal Welfare (Electronic Collars) (England) Regulations 2023, which will make it an offence if a “person is responsible for a cat or a dog and ... attaches an electronic collar to the cat or dog in England or causes an electronic collar to be attached to the cat or the dog in England”.

The government’s intention is that this statutory instrument will be nodded through both houses of parliament soon after the

Whitsun recess ends next month: it is scheduled to be implemented in February (just before the lambing season). If it passes, it will represent a triumph for the Kennel Club and the RSPCA, both of which have been campaigning for this measure since 2006.

Ranged against them are not just sheep farmers – and hundreds of thousands of actual dog-owners – but many concerned vets (the people who actually have to deal with the consequences of predation for the welfare of the animals concerned, on both sides). In 2018, when the government first pushed for this ban, a group of vets wrote to The Times: “We believe that the welfare consequences of a ban on these collars would be appalling ... As more city residents exercise their dogs in the countryside, there has been, according to NFU Mutual, a 67 per cent increase in attacks on sheep in the past two years. There is good scientific evidence that e-collars are extremely effective at preventing livestock-worrying without causing any detriment to the welfare of the dog. Moreover, we note that there have been no prosecutions for misuse of e-collars. Nor are leads a perfect safety measure: they can be wrenched out of the hand.”

The environment secretary then responsible – who wished to bring in such legislation – was Michael Gove. But it is now Dr Thérèse Coffey. Which is rather startling. Because in 2019 The Times revealed that Coffey, the MP for Suffolk Coastal, had contacted Steve Andrews, a dog-trainer, for help with the family pet, Lola (a pug-beagle cross), which had been lunging at other dogs. Andrews suggested training Lola with an e-collar and, he told The Times. “She said: ‘I have no issues with using a remote collar. How does it work?’” A video made by Andrews shows Lola wearing the collar and returning immediately on command to receive a treat when the electric pulse is triggered by Coffey’s sister, Clare. The Coffeys then bought an e-collar for Lola.

“Thérèse Coffey once used one to train her pug-beagle cross Lola

Hadley Freeman

‘Liberal’ thought police echo Salem witch trials



How to respond when you are damned for what you didn’t actually say?

When it comes to barbs, my hide is generally rhino-like. But last week I received an email that made me woozy with the injustice of it. A few weeks earlier I’d read a review of my book, an experience that always feels like attending one’s own funeral – sometimes you get adoring eulogies, and sometimes those eulogies are closer to the one Logan Roy got from his brother. In this case the review was in the latter camp. My book, *Good Girls*, is about anorexia nervosa, with just half a chapter addressing gender issues, and the reviewer complained: “Freeman never comes out and bluntly states that she believes [trans men] are in fact confused anorexics, but she circles this idea relentlessly, and tries to get several doctors to make the point, although none take the bait.”

Reviews, good and bad, are part of the privilege of being published. But given that a number of doctors in my book do describe in detail the psychological overlaps between anorexia and gender dysphoria in some adolescent girls, this critique seemed less of a subjective description and more of an objective misrepresentation.

So I did something I’d never done before: I sent a complaint to a newspaper. It wasn’t me making this point, I wrote, but the doctors – and look! Here are the pages in my book that prove it. Yet the paper dismissed my complaint because, the editor wrote, none of the doctors used the specific phrase “trans men are confused anorexics”. No, they didn’t, I silently raged in my kitchen, because I never asked them that. I don’t even think that. The only person who used that bizarrely reductive phrase was the reviewer. But I’m damned for it.

Sometimes an accusation is so ludicrous that addressing it feels like trying to hold an eel in your hands: the harder you grip, the more it slips from your grasp and entwines around your body until you fall on your face. The hardest crime to disprove is a thoughtcrime, as George Orwell called it, and it’s striking how

many women have been accused of it over the past half-dozen years, always about gender. In Channel 4’s upcoming documentary *Gender Wars*, the feminist academic Kathleen Stock is repeatedly accused of hating trans people, endangering trans people and doubting trans people’s right to exist, and her denials merely confirm her guilt in the eyes of her detractors. “Being in the same room as Dr Stock and hearing her say the things she says, when I know the meaning she has behind them, it just feels aggressive against me,” one Cambridge student says. Even if you say the right words, they know you’re thinking the wrong thoughts.

Last week it was Baroness Falkner’s turn on the ducking stool, after a dozen of her present and former colleagues at the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) compiled a dossier of complaints against her. A *Channel 4 News* report highlighted the allegation that Falkner once referred to Emma Laslett, a trans woman who had just appeared on *Mastermind*, as “a bloke in lipstick”. An understandably upset Laslett responded: “If that’s true, it’s disgusting.” It is disgusting, but what would be even more disgusting were if the programme had misrepresented what Falkner said, as other news reports have suggested, and if she had actually been quoting some online abuse Laslett had received to demonstrate how difficult life is for trans people.

Falkner had to spend £30,000 of her own money and watch her reputation be torn to shreds before it was finally announced on

Friday that the EHRC was no longer investigating her.

If you’ve quietly longed to stick it to women for years, especially middle-aged ones, then this has been a boom time for you. I’ve watched so-called liberal men chinstroke over which women should be allowed to speak in public. JK Rowling? Certainly not. The Scottish politician Joanna Cherry? Best not. One author friend was dropped by her agent not for anything she’d actually written but because of a general sense that she might have thought wrong thoughts about the gender argument. A manager at a publishing house tweeted last week that people in the book industry will be “called out” just for following “GC people” – gender-critical people, aka those who understand there are two biological sexes. In 2020 more than 300 Guardian employees signed a letter complaining about a “pattern of publishing transphobic content”. The letter didn’t specify what that content was, but a strikingly well-briefed Buzzfeed article said it was “in response to a column by Suzanne Moore” that had argued for the protection of women’s rights. What, precisely, in this column was transphobic was not specified. Just make the vague accusation and let it settle like a stink. Soon after that, Moore left the paper.

Arthur Miller’s play *The Crucible* is 70 years old this year, and it’s devastating how prescient it still feels, even though it is set 330 years ago during the Salem witch trials, the ultimate tale of women and thoughtcrime. The play was a parable about America’s then most recent foray into prosecuting thoughtcrime, McCarthyism, when anyone suspected of communism was damned. One character says that “witchcraft is ... an invisible crime, is it not? ... Now we cannot hope the witch will accuse herself, granted? Therefore we must rely on her victims – and they do testify, the children certainly do testify.”

The children will keep testifying. Let us hope more adults can do what the EHRC did last week: find the backbone to stand up to them.

@HadleyFreeman

“For the first time ever, I sent a complaint to a newspaper



Matthew Syed

The world is changing but Britain is paralysed by its own indecision

Our political culture becomes ever more trivialised as our predicament grows worse. Inaction is fatal

Writer's block is not an ideal affliction when you are a professional writer, and I get the jitters from time to time. I had a bout last weekend when I couldn't come up with a topic for my column, procrastinated, filed late and almost got into trouble. This weekend, though, let me use writer's block to my advantage by making it the subject of this piece. For I think that the UK – Britain plc – is suffering from its political equivalent. We are on a tight deadline, need to act swiftly but seem paralysed.

Let me flesh out the context a little. It is something of a cliché to say that the world is changing faster than ever before but it is undeniably true. I had a chat with my two children recently about getting lost in the north of England as a teenager after catching the wrong coach to the wrong destination, and they couldn't understand why my parents had been so anxious. Why didn't they just call you on your mobile? Why didn't they track you on Find My Phone? Errr. They didn't exist back then, darling. Whaaa?

In business there is a dictum that unless a company is changing as fast on the inside as the world is changing on the outside, it is heading for extinction. It's a useful insight because it highlights the overlooked truth that empires do not typically fail because of bad decisions but because of indecision. Ancient Rome, for example, allowed the currency to be debased rather than facing up to its strategic problems, leaving it even more snookered. Blockbuster Video watched the

germination of streaming technology while merrily continuing to build shops renting out analogue videos to a mass audience disappearing before its eyes. Both were, in a key sense, destroyed from within.

Here in Britain we seem to be making the same dubious journey. As a once great power, we have long been troubled by the concept of national decline, but this fear seems to have reached the point of crisis. Slow growth and stagnant productivity since the credit crunch have spawned headlines that we might be turning into Argentina at the beginning of the 20th century or Italy towards the end of it. Some projections show that by 2030 the average British family will be worse off than the average Polish. Again and again, data reveals the imperative for decisive action, but we are like a rabbit caught in the headlights.

Curiously, it is not as if there isn't a broad consensus on what we should be doing. Almost everyone agrees that we should change the funding of our increasingly corrupt political system – the main parties at the last general election received nearly half their funding from a hundred or so "super-donors", each pledging close to half a million pounds. We should reform the House of Lords. The NHS requires reform too, albeit there are disagreements about what form that should take. Loosening planning restrictions is another change that would increase growth and help young people, but it is blocked (that word again) by a small caucus in a failing parliament.

Or take the surreal debate last week on immigration numbers. A helpful

articles in The Times yesterday showed that there are two coherent responses: the first – favoured by Suella Braverman – is to cut the numbers and perhaps take a short-term hit to growth. The other – favoured by Jeremy Hunt – is to keep them high to leave headroom for tax cuts before the next election. In other words, this is a classic trade-off that requires decisive action and serious intent. But what do we see instead? A government that continues to promise to cut numbers while taking actions that increase them, thus destroying what is left of trust in the political process.

It feels as if we snookered not by the outside world but by our own neuroses. The one big action we did take, Brexit, turned out to be disastrous, and so we are now terrified of doing anything at all. Even on the consequences of our decision to leave the EU, we glimpse the same crippling indecision. I have been astonished to see apparently sensible commentators telling us that we can't even debate, let alone address, the glaring flaws of Brexit for at least a decade because of the sensitivities of Leave voters. Friends, by then it will be too late.

We need to open our eyes. Last week I spent a little time with the Indian high commissioner, and he talked about the rapid digital transformation happening across the subcontinent in an economy growing at close to 7 per cent. One looks across to France and rioting as the government introduces necessary pension reforms. Even America (which, admittedly, has its own political neuroses) has implemented three huge pieces of legislation on chips, infrastructure and energy. Agree or

disagree with the solutions, it is difficult to doubt the intent. Meanwhile, we in Britain are not unlike a mammal that has curled up into a small ball; a frightened hedgehog.

And what perhaps worries me the most is that the feverish activity that is happening in politics is not directed at addressing our decline but distracting us from it – a kind of Freudian displacement. Inside accounts from government reveal just how much bandwidth is taken up by culture war nonsense, personal grievances and other ephemera. Politics has always had this dimension, but could anyone sane person dispute that our political culture has become ever more trivialised as our predicament has become ever more serious? The two trends are, I believe, intimately related, particularly under this exhausted government.

This isn't just about condemning the political class but also noting the fingerprints of the public – us – at the crime scene. For too long we have avoided the hard truths that galvanise change. We have pretended that an ever-shrinking working population can fund ever-longer retirements and care; deluded ourselves that we can keep restricting the supply of houses as a bribe to those who already have them; and more.

We have to wake up from this magical thinking, for it, too, is paralysing us. The alternative is that we are going to forget our homework, miss our deadline and receive a stern ticking-off from the editor called history.

Britain can remain great – but we can no longer dither.

@MatthewSyed

Nick Wallis

Racist labels for its own people: the Post Office in a nutshell

I am not sure when I last saw the word "negroid" on a document produced by an arm of the British state, but I'm pretty sure it wouldn't have been this century. The Post Office's 2008 classification of its sub-postmasters as "negroid types", "dark-skinned European types" and "Chinese/Japanese types" (among others) is appalling but, to those of us who have been watching the government-owned organisation for a while, not exactly surprising.

The racial identification codes (RICs) appeared on a Post Office security operations team compliance document that was current when the organisation's false prosecution spree was at its height. It has been brought to light through some tenacious freedom of information requests by the campaigner Eleanor Shaikh.

RICs including "negroid types" were adopted by the police in the late 1970s and evidently also brought into the Post Office security setup. By 2007 a Metropolitan Police briefing document on identification codes used the word "black" instead of "negroid". Why, in 2008, did no one at the Post Office have a problem with describing someone as "negroid"? The answer, in a word, is culture.

Between 2000 and 2013 the Post Office's in-house prosecutors accused hundreds of sub-postmasters and its own staff with theft, false accounting and fraud. More often than not, the only evidence came from the Post Office's Fujitsu-built IT accounting system, Horizon. As we have discovered over the course of an epic High Court litigation and the public inquiry going on now, Horizon was badly written, fundamentally insecure and unreliable. Innocent people went to prison.

Over the past ten years I've spoken to dozens of sub-postmasters about their experience at the hands of the security team. Investigators searched homes without warrants, refused suspects the opportunity to have a solicitor present during interviews and then would somehow lose or fail to hand over the interview recordings. The investigators were, it probably goes without saying, almost all white, with many burly ex-coppers making up the numbers.

Any sub-postmaster who tried to suggest their Horizon terminal was not

working properly would be told that no other branch in the country had malfunctioning IT.

A telling section of the same compliance document revealed last week provides a generic template to instruct investigators on how to set out their interview notes. The example suspect's address is "Mrs Anne Smith, Quids Inn Post Office". Of course it is.

This idea of the security team acting as a law unto itself is embedded in its DNA. The Post Office has been around since the 1600s, and the security team proudly declares itself the "oldest recognised criminal investigations force in the world". It has its own, superior way of doing things, a centuries-old institutional arrogance that deemed it perfectly acceptable for the Post Office to pursue sub-postmasters through the criminal courts without involving the police or the CPS. It also created an environment that, in 2013, allowed the Post Office head of security to issue an internal order to shred documents relating to problems with Horizon.

The Post Office has not prosecuted anyone since 2015. It has apologised for the "racist" language used in its security team compliance document, and its chief executive, Nick Read, has ordered an investigation into how the codes "came to be included in our guidance". The Post Office was unable to tell me when it stopped using "negroid types" as an identification or what it used racial information for.

No one has been formally censured for their role in this scandal. A police investigation has been running for more than three years without a single arrest. The public inquiry continues to rumble on. Phase 4 – coincidentally focusing on the actions of the Post Office security team and in-house lawyers – will begin in July. Once it is under way, I suspect there will be more jaw-dropping revelations, matching the very serious questions about institutional racism being asked this weekend.

Nick Wallis is the author of *The Great Post Office Scandal*

NEWMAN'S WEEK



Robert Colville

Better drugs might have saved my wife’s life, but we’re making it far too hard to develop them



The best ideas are always the simplest. As Covid cases started to explode across the world, two professors at Oxford University – Martin Landray and Peter Horby – thought it might be useful to find out what treatments actually worked. Within weeks a clinical trial known as Recovery was up and running, involving tens of thousands of patients from every acute hospital in the country. It was Recovery that showed Donald Trump’s beloved hydroxychloroquine, an antimalarial drug, did nothing to stop the disease, but that a low-cost steroid called dexamethasone cut death rates by a third for patients on ventilators and a fifth for patients on oxygen. That single finding is estimated to have saved more than a million lives. Which is why Landray and Horby are now Sir Martin and Sir Peter – and why the former may never have to buy a pint again in the Oxfordshire village we both call home. But the most remarkable thing about Recovery was not its findings but its speed and cost. Today, getting a promising new drug through a large-scale trial can cost hundreds of millions of pounds. While others chipped in, the core government funding for Recovery

was just £20 million – possibly the best investment the UK has ever made. Landray’s belief – his obsession – is that this was not a one-off. He thinks that by learning the lessons of the Recovery trial, and the many others he has organised, we can bring the cost of medical trials down by an order of magnitude. And this really matters. In recent years the cost of getting approval for new drugs has soared, as has the length of time it takes and the number of hoops that have to be jumped through. That means fewer and fewer drugs are tested, covering an ever narrower range of diseases, to be sold at ever higher prices. And it also means that it becomes prohibitively expensive to test, as Recovery did, whether existing low-cost medicines might be used to tackle other diseases. This may sound dry and dusty. But it is a matter of life and death. Four years ago I lost my wife, Andrea. She developed a condition called autoimmune hepatitis. She was one of a handful of such patients who don’t respond well to steroids. She needed a liver transplant. But the steroids had weakened her immune system to the point where she caught an infection. She couldn’t have the transplant until it was

gone. Instead, it stayed and spread, eventually reaching her brain. She was 40. Our second child was just ten months old. Andrea was unlucky – desperately so. But even when the steroids work, taking them is a bloody awful experience, especially for transplant patients, who have to stay on immunosuppressants for life. The main drugs used, which haven’t changed since the 1950s, are a brute force treatment, with a horrendous list of side effects. So why do we still prescribe them – apart from the fact that they’re dirt cheap? Well, some conditions affect enough patients to make developing and testing a better drug make sense. But autoimmune diseases are tricky. There are lots of people who have them, but they are spread out across many conditions, some rare – like autoimmune hepatitis. So it’s never been cost-effective to run a trial proving that, yes, these new drugs are also safe to use for patients like Andrea. Leaving them to be treated with a blunderbuss rather than a scalpel. If there is anywhere on the planet that should find it easy to do that kind of research, and those kinds of trials, it is Britain, because of both the NHS’s centralised design and our strength in

life sciences. But we are going backwards. Over the past decade the UK’s share of global pharmaceutical research and development has fallen by a third. The number of clinical trials carried out by industry has plummeted, as has the number of patients becoming involved in trials. There are all sorts of reasons for this, but two obvious ones are the strain on

the NHS, and the blossoming bureaucracy and misguided regulatory burden placed on medical research. After Andrea’s death I threw myself into fundraising. Thanks to the generosity of hundreds of people, including many Sunday Times readers, I ended up raising more than £125,000, which the Medical Research Foundation charity then matched. That money is funding a project run by a brilliant scientist called Zania Stamataki at Birmingham University to investigate a new liver mechanism her team has discovered, which could help patients not only with viral and autoimmune hepatitis but liver cancer too. The team is based right next to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, which carries out more liver transplants than anywhere else in Europe. That should make collaboration incredibly easy. But when I visited, the researchers told me it was growing much harder for their NHS colleagues to find the time and resources to help them set up and run trials. The result is that all our boastful post-pandemic talk of leading the world is sounding increasingly hollow. Take the heart drug incdisiran, developed by Novartis. By testing the drug within the NHS, Landray and his team were able to

cut costs from \$1 billion to \$100 million. The quid pro quo was that British patients would get it at a lower price. It seemed a win-win, and a template for the future. But the rollout of the drug in Manchester recently collapsed because GPs were reluctant to prescribe it, leading Novartis to move the project overseas. The government is alive to these problems. On Friday, it welcomed and adopted pretty much all the recommendations of an official review of clinical trials by Lord O’Shaughnessy, a former health minister, including bonuses for GPs who sign up patients. The review was an excellent piece of work. But, as Landray says, there is room to be more ambitious still – to make Britain the absolute world leader in clinical trials, the best and best-value place for companies to do their research. To make it so that every patient in every hospital is given the chance to take part in trials that may benefit them, so that every result from every course of treatment is tracked and compared and the best results picked out. In the process we would be not only creating growth, but saving lives on an industrial scale. Lives like that of the woman I still love so very, very much. @RColville

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Terrible price of my delivery rush

You report on the death of Jennifer Davies, who was hit by a delivery van (“Pedal-to-metal parcel rush that delivered only tragedy”, News, last week). I did something very similar when I worked as a van driver. Delivery driving is very stressful. You are often shouted at, threatened and abused. I had a small fraction of the number of deliveries that the driver in that case, Kamil Zieba, had to make, but, as I was delivering tyres, every drop took much longer. I was encouraged to keep to the schedule and told there were always customers waiting. I failed to see a motorcyclist at a junction. Now, because of my terrible mistake, he is in a wheelchair. I think all van drivers should, like their HGV counterparts, be required by law to take a 45-minute break after 4½ hours. I believe that would significantly reduce deaths and serious injuries. *Graham Ashen Horsham, West Sussex*

Day of hell I worked for a day as an agency driver for a courier company. I had 120 deliveries to make and little order to the way the parcels had been loaded. There was no time for a meal break: I was driving as fast as safely possible, in a state of stress, all day. I had been told that I had to be back before 6pm. I just

made it, but with 40 parcels undelivered. The boss swore and shouted for ten minutes. As I was leaving he said, “Same time tomorrow then?” Er, no, I don’t think so. These drivers are under constant pressure, with far too many deliveries to make. We dislike vans tearing along our roads, but we all want “free” next-day delivery. *Michael Donkin Morpeth, Northumberland*

Cynical firms It’s not just van drivers. Look at motorcycle and bicycle couriers – especially those delivering food, who career down pavements and through pedestrianised areas. I once complained to a leading food delivery company about a rider I managed to identify by a code on his pannier. After weeks of emails, the company finally responded . . . by removing the numbers from all the panniers. *Nicholas Max, Nottingham*

Faster, faster I have a friend who took a job with a delivery firm as a stopgap. He still says it was the most high-pressure and negative environment he has worked in. Delivery times are critical – and if he was running behind for any reason, the office would be on the phone to him, chasing him to move faster. *Sean Tucker, Lincoln*

I spy another one for the cliché list

Further to Rod Liddle’s item on the most hated clichés (Comment, last week), may I add the irritating preface “Look”. It is used especially frequently by politicians who find themselves on the back foot when asked a difficult question in an interview. It is pompous and patronising – particularly as what follows is usually a load of tosh. *Andy Urban-Smith Cheltenham*

We are not amazed The most overused of all is “amazing”. It usually isn’t. *C Lionel Astill Llangollen, Denbighshire*

Wholly unnecessary “Absolutely”. It is used constantly by presenters and interviewees. What’s wrong with “yes”? *Rose Smiley, Middlesbrough*

Stuff and nonsense I was recently asked by a receptionist if I knew the way to my meeting. I replied: “Yes.” She replied: “Gorge.” *Annie Tansey, London SE11*

VICKI COUCHMAN FOR THE SUNDAY TIMES



The Lees family are stuck in a one-bedroom bungalow

Our house plans hit a brick wall

Martina Lees is right: the planning process in the UK is broken (“Our planning nightmare shows why Britain can’t build houses”, News Review, last week). I made an application for a building with one floor above ground. It was turned down because the second floor – which was never requested and not in the plans – apparently did not fit the appearance of the local area. When I pointed out this absurdity, the local planning office promised a response within three months (as that was its “service level”). Five months later, after no response, I tackled it again, to be told that the officer who had looked at my case was a confused temporary worker . . . and because of his mistake I would have to apply again.

Things do not need to be this hard. *Steve Goodburn, Folkestone*

Imaginary objections We applied to build in our back garden. There were similar developments close by. The application was refused because the width of the access (five metres) did not conform to fire regulations. When I asked our local fire department, it was not aware of any such regulations. It was refused for a second time by a planning officer who said the windows on the east elevation would overlook the neighbour’s property. I pointed out there were no windows on the east elevation. He responded: “That’s a matter of opinion.” *Penelope La Costa Watts, Fleet*

Paper round It took me 17 months to get permission for a new house

to replace a substandard one. It was a building recession and the planners had little work: I suspect that is why they kept rejecting my plans. In the end I tired of making changes and resubmitted the original plan. It was passed. *Bob Kerby, Chichester*

Dead wood A normal person, when undertaking a project, makes a list of things to be achieved. A council employee makes a list of reasons something cannot happen. There needs to be a clearout of the thousands of ineffective people hiding within local government. I spent 50 years in construction and property development, dealing with countless local authorities. Never did I come across a person working for a local authority that I thought worth approaching to join our organisation. Not one. *Malc Jeffs, Street, Somerset*

Rhythm blues I applied to turn my mum’s bungalow into a house, so my family could live with her and care for her when the time came. The road was a mix of periods and styles, with flats, houses and bungalows. Planning permission was refused on the basis that our plan was “not in keeping with the rhythm of the road”. This made us laugh out loud. The phrase is often recalled when we drive down the same road and see the house someone has recently jammed into a side garden. *Debra Birrell, Southport*

The Sunday Times,
1 London Bridge Street,
London SE1 9GF
Email: letters@sunday-times.co.uk

BIRTHDAYS

David Baddiel, writer, 59
Bernardine Evaristo, novelist, 64
Phil Foden, footballer, 23
Gladys Knight, singer, 79
Kylie Minogue, singer, 55
Carey Mulligan, actress, 38
Mary Portas, retail expert, 63
John Stones, footballer, 29
Kyle Walker, footballer, 33



Kylie Minogue is 55 today

ANNIVERSARIES

1987 Mathias Rust, 18, lands a light aircraft near Red Square in Moscow
1998 Pakistan conducts five underground nuclear tests

No lessons learnt in gender clinics

We are a group of clinicians and academics concerned about the treatment of young people, aged 17-25, in adult gender identity services. The Tavistock GIDS model for children and adolescents has been recognised as inappropriate but the new, evidence-based approach has not reached adult gender services, which remain driven by the same “affirming” policy that was the undoing of the Tavistock. This is gravely concerning. One fifth of those referred to adult services are still legally children (17), and two thirds are developmentally adolescent (17-25). There is considerable evidence that identity may not settle until the mid-twenties, and the Cass review emphasised careful exploration as the best policy until that age. Some may argue that once young people are 18 they are adults, so consent is a simple matter. We disagree. Because of the complexity and co-morbidity in such cases, the decision to place these young people on a surgical pathway should be made with caution. The NHS is piloting a new kind of adult gender service, rooted in primary care. This also takes a one-size-fits-all, affirmative, clinical approach and represents a new level of risk to the health of young people. *Nick Temple, former chief executive, Tavistock; Dr Anthony Latham, Scottish Council on Human Bioethics; Seth Bhunnoo, consultant psychiatrist; Stanley Ruszczynski, psychoanalyst; Dr David Bell; and 20 others*

POINTS

Striking lucky You report that NHS consultants on £105,000 will join strikes (News, last week). One assumes that most will still see and treat their private patients – and in fact will have more time to do so. Ker-ching! *Paul Blanchard, Barry*

Purée peril Robert Read is right about the waste left in tubes (Letters, last week). I too cut them open, and this works well with everything from toothpaste to hand cream. But there are hazards. I have a very sore tongue from sneakily licking the inside of a tomato purée tube. Beware the consequences of thrift. *Viv Mercer, Southport*

Speed awareness Rita Clarke can apparently keep to a 20mph limit only by looking at the speedometer rather than the road (Letters, last week). It’s a comment I’ve seen elsewhere. I’m intrigued to know how she and others manage to keep to 30mph, 40mph and indeed 70mph. And can we all be informed

Goodbye to daily race humiliation

As the child of Indian immigrants who grew up in the Midlands in the 1970s, I can relate strongly to the experiences described by Aasmah Mir (“Kids rubbed my skin to see if the colour would come off”, Magazine, May 7). There were daily humiliations of racism and social rejection. Aasmah remembers the trauma of a school dance. My most enduring memory is of sitting on a crowded bus, with people standing because all the seats were occupied. Apart from the one next to me. Yet I have grown up resilient and eternally grateful for the life chances I have been given in the UK. I do not wish for apologies or reparations, but I do hope that our children do not have to endure the difficulties we did simply because of the colour of their skin. Things have improved hugely for ethnic minorities, and I am optimistic about the future – not least because of the pledges made by our King at the dawn of the new Carolean age. *Harpreet Singh Arshi, Exeter*

READERS’ POLL

Last week we asked:
Was leaving the EU a mistake?



This week’s question:
Would you want to live for ever?
Have your say at [sundaytimes.co.uk/poll](https://www.sundaytimes.co.uk/poll)

JOIN THE CONVERSATION ONLINE

Manchester City won the Premier League title last weekend. Opinion was split on whether Pep Guardiola was “unequaled in football history” (**Peter Macnab**) or merely “copying Bielsa and Cruyff” (**Tam Muir**). **Michael Ward** wanted “to see him take on a team from scratch. Not a lower-league

team, but maybe one fallen from grace without an excessive amount of cash.” **P Shaw** jumped in: “Fallen from grace? Steady on. Klopp hasn’t been sacked yet . . .” A literary giant had died, we reported. **Pamela Payne** said she would be “rereading my favourite Martin Amis novel, *The Information*, as a

memorial to him”. “Yet was he popular?” demanded **W Abercromby**. “As measured by the number of people who actually bought and read his books, not particularly.” **Coralie Palmer** pointed out his “hugely positive effect on literary criticism, for a start”. **A Lithgow** reckoned he was a genius “second only to Ian

McEwan in that generation of British writers”. “What about Julian Barnes?” interjected **Stephen Eason**. “McEwan is exceptionally good, but not as good as Barnes.” So there we have it: Martin Amis, nearly as good as McEwan, who is nearly as good as Barnes. But not in the view of Will Self, who bid adieu to both

Amis and Café Rouge. One word in the latter piece tripped up **Roger Houghton**: “Why say ‘echt’ instead of ‘real’ or ‘genuine’? Is there some subtle difference of meaning I am missing? I would have understood if he had said ‘vrai!’” We think it adds vim, brio . . . no, pep. **Rob Nash**

Your comments from
[thesundaytimes.co.uk](https://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk)

COMMENT

Camilla Long

Poor old Martin Amis was just terrible with the ladies. I mean, he almost offended me



Two authors were on my mind last week. Martin Amis, of course, who died nine days ago, and another writer I'd also interviewed: Jilly Cooper. On the face of it you couldn't think of two less similar people. Cooper: wild, romping. Amis: masterly, but you could only read one page an hour. Peer closer, however, and there *are* similarities.

Both were/are obsessed with class; both write about money and sex. Both created insatiable, unforgettable monsters: John Self (Amis) and Rupert Campbell-Black (Cooper). They debuted these characters within a year of each other, in sensational, mononymic novels, during one of the finest decades for writing and cultural thought the world has known: the 1980s.

Both of their books were incredibly powerful and caught the moment, and they could never, ever, be written now.

It saddens me beyond measure that this is the case and that Amis is dead, and will take a chunk of that confident, swaggering world with him. What are we left with? Tepid burble on television sofas: Rishi Sunak (first from Oxford, like Amis), sitting with a *Big Brother* contestant, trying to talk about books?

During an interview on *This Morning* with the prime minister, Alison Hammond, the world's worst interviewer, now playing Phillip Schofield to Dermot O'Leary's Holly Willoughby, said that she'd been told (probably by Sunak's people) that he was "really into" Jilly Cooper.

"Yes, I am," giggled Sunak. "Oh, I love a Jilly Cooper book – they're amazing," barfed Hammond. Sunak paused. "Which ones?" he said. "I can't remember. Just the sexy bits," she trilled.

Stupid prime minister – did he think this was an actual show about reading? This is what we have instead of culture now. Two fake people talking in a fake way about books they probably haven't read in search of ratings/votes. What Sunak, if he'd had any balls, should have said is "Martin Amis".

I think Amis saw this plastic nightmare coming and tried to warn us, but by the time I interviewed him he was already being eaten by the backlash.

He'd insulted Muslims and written a provocative, but very bad, novel about the sexual revolution. He'd been dismissed as a misogynist: a hater who bedded and shredded women in the 1970s. He had a love child, screamed the new purists. But, a small voice inside me thought, so what? What decent writer hasn't?

To read any interview with him by that point was to be beckoned into a world of all-male laughs, nicknames ("Lazy Shit"), in-jokes ("the sock"). The tiresome literary playboy myth did grate. You showed your credentials by worshipping what you thought Mart worshipped: the sentence, the idea, Christopher Hitchens ("I would back him against Cicero, against Demosthenes").

There was a macho-ness about him that meant, like my predecessor on the television column, AA Gill, he repelled all editing. Towards the end, it really showed – *The Pregnant Widow* was 500 pages of nonstop perving.

Why did he have to surround himself with such bombastic father surrogates that he felt he needed to suck up to and show off to? Why did he indulge everyone's fantasies? It nearly ruined his work. Almost all the tributes that appeared after Amis's death reflected this: back-slapping "man of letters" stuff for men, about men, by men.

The person I met when I turned up to interview him wasn't like this: far from an infant terrible, he was in fact quite kind, gentle, watchful. He seemed genuinely distressed when I asked him why (I paraphrase) he was a bastard. He loved women, so why were they so mean to him, calling him "the scribbling dwarf"? He had that fatal thing of talking as if a maximum of five people were listening.

So he'd say (to me, a female writer): women definitely don't make better writers. They were good novelists (George Eliot and Jane Austen) "but their showing in poetry ..." he trailed off. Or he'd say: old people should be subject to mass euthanasia. "There should be a booth on every corner where you could get a martini and a medal."

If you asked him whether he thought this was a stupid thing to say or not, he'd probably reply: it's a harmless joke,

DAVID LEVENSON/GETTY IMAGES



Martin Amis was a kind of shield against the policing of thoughts and words but, in the end, even he couldn't withstand it

isn't it? But the new purists didn't see it that way.

The year 2011, when I interviewed him, was the end of harmless jokes. It was also the end of people like Amis. It was the last time you could say something like "women can't write poetry" or "let's give old people a martini and then kill them" without being savaged. You couldn't talk as if it was just the middle common room any more.

Looking back over my interview, it almost sickens me to watch him fail to navigate the new normal, unaware of what was coming, driving himself deeper into trouble with almost every sentence.

He said his sister, an alcoholic who died at 46, was so sexually voracious she'd have needed "the Taliban" to keep her in control. *Pride and Prejudice*, he

“He said his sister, an alcoholic, was so sexually voracious she’d have needed the Taliban to keep her in control

wrote in *The Pregnant Widow*, had one flaw: no "40-page sex scene". He was attacked for almost everything he'd said in the interview. You look back and think: just why?

I think I probably saw people like Amis as a shield against the uniform mass bollocks that was approaching, the policing of thoughts and words and opinions, but in the end even he couldn't withstand it. Provocative, experimental, mischievous, talented: for me, he was, as Hanif Kureishi wrote last week, one of the "rude" ones.

Cooper, too: a brilliantly rude writer, unafraid to create truly repellent characters and celebrate them. Only difference between Amis and Cooper was that she loves her characters, whereas he hated them.

Which are, for the record, both great ways to come at writing.

Aasmah Mir

Week ending



After working for the Beeb it's hard to have opinions but you do recover

Andrew Marr got me right in the feels last week. He said he had had to censor himself so much at the BBC, in the interests of impartiality, that he even found he was self-censoring in the pub.

I know the feeling. After 17 years at the BBC, which I mostly enjoyed, I found it hard to have an opinion on anything. It's rinsed out of you. Where I live is riven by low-traffic neighbourhoods. There's a 50-50 split, with loud angry voices on both sides, and bollards pulled out and signs defaced. Yet I find

myself perched on the fence, which isn't helpful to anyone.

I understand why, especially now, when broadcasters' tweets are rigorously policed, it feels important to be fair and impartial. But impartiality or our notion of it has to change. We are not AI robots; we are human beings. You don't have to go the full Gary Lineker, but the expectation that BBC presenters don't have opinions on anything doesn't really work. Because even if you don't let it slip that you support X, people will

still accuse you of bias because of your questioning or their own beliefs. It's artificial and draining.

It would be much better to admit occasionally you can see the benefits or drawbacks of something while letting people who disagree discuss it with equal airtime. That's what we do on Times Radio – shameless plug – and I really believe it's the only way to save modern discourse and indeed our collective sanity.

Aasmah Mir co-presents the Times Radio breakfast show

● Pyjamas. Face cream. Clean pants. Despite my best intentions, I always forget something when I pack. And that's why I hate packing.

A survey last week told us that we leave two essential items behind every time we go away. I haven't forgotten anything that important, but what bothers me is the persistence of the forgetfulness. As the taxi winds its way to an airport or station, I find myself wondering when I will finally remember the item I have left on the kitchen table or not even taken out of a drawer. A phone charger, moisturiser, my glasses. OK, a holiday isn't ruined by a dead battery, a dry face or eyesight so bad that I bump into things, but it is annoying.

Which is why I am typing all these words out on my tiny phone, not my laptop: I forgot it.

It's not as bad, though, as the time I realised that I had forgotten to pack any underwear for myself. I whispered it to my daughter, who burst out laughing and then shouted to the whole plane: "My mummy hasn't brought any clean pants!"

If the funeral's booked, you've left it too late

Flight Sergeant Peter Brown died alone aged 96 in his flat one week before Christmas. A Second World War airman, one of the "Pilots of the Caribbean", he had lost contact with friends and family and his funeral was about to be a brief and lonely service at a crematorium, Eleanor Rigby-style.

Instead, after a plea to find his relatives went viral, his funeral this week was huge and loud – attended by 500 people including historians, ex-servicemen and the broadcaster Clive Myrie.

We know that former servicemen are often treated poorly – his landlord had thoughtlessly cleared his

flat, throwing out or giving to charity shops his medals and memorabilia. Yes, something good came of this – some relatives were tracked down in Jamaica and Canada, and he was given a grand send-off – but wouldn't it have been better for him to have been alive to see it? Why do we wait for people to die before we celebrate their lives? Why don't we tell them now?

Funerals are for families and friends to say goodbye; they are no use to the most important person. So, if you have a loved one who is nearing the end of their life, wouldn't it be a wonderful thing to gather everyone together and show them how much they are loved?

NEWMAN'S VIEW



Tina blew my tiny teen mind

Tina Turner had her second summer when I was a teenager. She was in her prime in the mid-1980s, starting a new life without her abusive husband and enjoying an even more successful career. I didn't appreciate it at the time. I was a teenager who loved young, pretty pop stars like Belinda Carlisle and Madonna.

Turner's songs were ridiculously good – *Private Dancer*, *Better Be Good to Me* – but her refusal to behave like a woman in her forties didn't sit well with me. Who was this woman who was always in a leather miniskirt? I had already absorbed society's notions of how a pop star should look. What an idiot, eh?

DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION

Simply the best articles on the go

A digital subscription keeps you informed wherever you are, whatever you're doing. Live updates, newsletters, commenting, extra puzzles and more for less than £1 a day.

Try a digital subscription free for one month at thetimes.co.uk/trial or scan the QR code

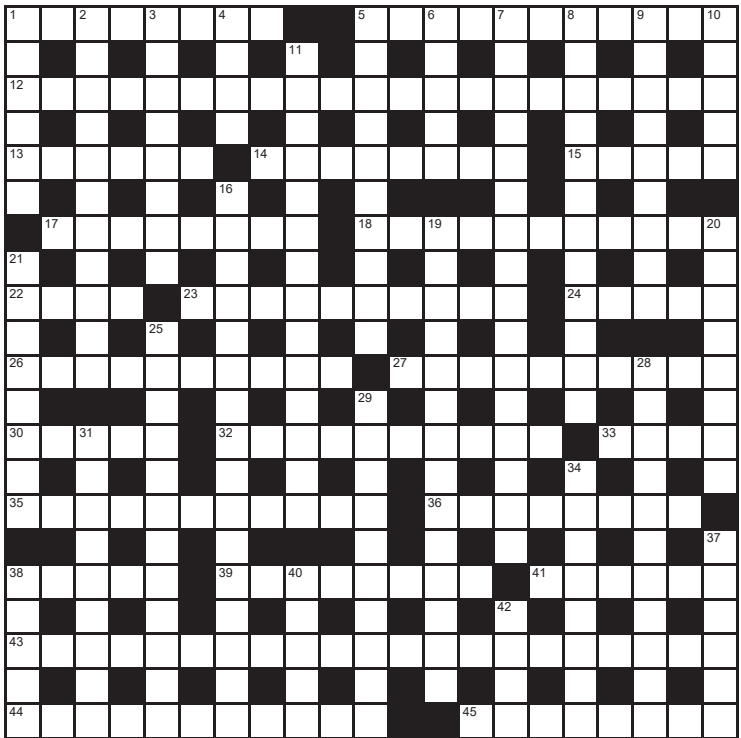
Subscribe with

LESS THAN £1 A DAY

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Know your times

Offer available for new subscribers only. UK residents aged 18+ only. Pay nothing for your first month then £26 per month for the 7 day digital subscription. Visit store.thetimes.co.uk for full subscription T&Cs. This is not a time limited promotion. We reserve the right to change the subscription price with 30 days' notice.



- 1 butter is a 4oz packet, in American cookery (1,5,2)
- 2 The inventors of Coca-Cola, Dr Pepper and Pepsi-Cola all worked as ____ (11)
- 3 Poet (pictured) whose inspiration was once interrupted by "a person on business from Porlock" (6,6,9)
- 4 Don McLean's cover of this 1961 Roy Orbison hit was a UK No 1 in 1980 (6)
- 5 Governing in the style of Papa Doc or Idi Amin (8)
- 6 Alaska's longest river, with its source in Canada (5)
- 7 A grave 16 inches long in a Lincolnshire church is purportedly that of someone with the same name as this folklore character (3,5)
- 8 When a disease is ____, it has no clear signs or symptoms (11)
- 9 In literary usage, to see (4)
- 10 What "Max and Keira's law" makes everyone in England unless they opt out (5,5)
- 11 Food often served with pickled ginger and wasabi (5)
- 12 Tomas de ____ was Spain's first Grand Inquisitor (10)
- 13 The first ____ in Handel's Messiah is Comfort Ye My People (10)
- 14 Germanic name for various cured pork products (5)
- 15 The only Swede to win Olympic high jump gold, in 2004 (6,4)
- 16 The tibiofemoral and patellofemoral joints (4)
- 17 2005 film based on a fictional character called Nurse Matilda (5,6)
- 18 Bavaria's third-largest city after Munich and Nuremberg (8)
- 19 Genus of sap-sucking 37Ds (5)
- 20 To persuade by deception or flattery (8)
- 21 Australian actor Leo ____'s best-known role was Horace Rumpole (6)
- 22 To be involved in many and various activities (4,1,6,2,5,3)
- 23 Undeservedly neglected people or things (11)
- 24 That which is indicated on road signs by numbers and % or : (8)

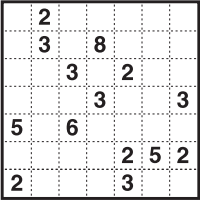
A black and white portrait of William Wordsworth, an English Romantic poet. He is shown from the chest up, facing slightly to the right. He has dark, wavy hair and is wearing a dark coat over a white cravat. The background is dark and indistinct.

Down

- On January 1, 2021, the French departments of Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin became the European Collectivity of ____ (6)
- Entertainer whose act often included the egg and bag trick (5,6)
- City called Karl-Marx-Stadt between 1953 and 1990 (8)
- The grains of *Avena sativa* (4)
- Another name for "stage left" (6,4)
- In Bond films, the entrance to this racecourse has represented the airports of St Petersburg and Shanghai (5)
- The discovery of DNA's double helix was a major achievement in this field (9,7)
- To remain not out throughout a whole innings (5,4,3)
- Characters like Sancho Panza and Doctor Watson (9)
- For the last five weeks of his life, ____ Forkbeard was king of Denmark and England (5)
- Collector of jumpers, and Dictionary Corner appearances on Countdown (5,9) (pictured, right)
- The ____ is death while fighting for a principle or country (7,9)
- "Dewey defeats Truman" was a famously wrong ____ (6,8)
- Someone waiting around aimlessly (8)
- To get rid of something or someone unwanted (8)
- Ohio is the " ____ " (7,5)
- Horace Rumpole's chambers were located in the ____ (5,6)
- Anglicised name for one summit in the Welsh Three Peaks Challenge (5,5)
- Dutch city where DAF Trucks is based (9)
- Hidden from view (8)
- Creature with tibiae but no fibulas (6)
- For a particular purpose only (2,3)
- Nocturnal devotion, especially on the eve of a church festival (5)
- Word that can follow "blow" or "bubble" (4)

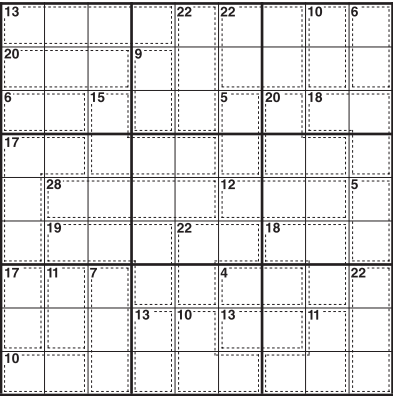
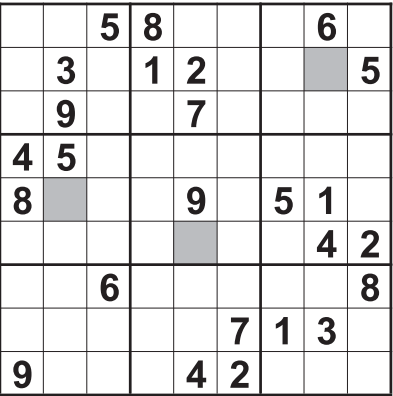
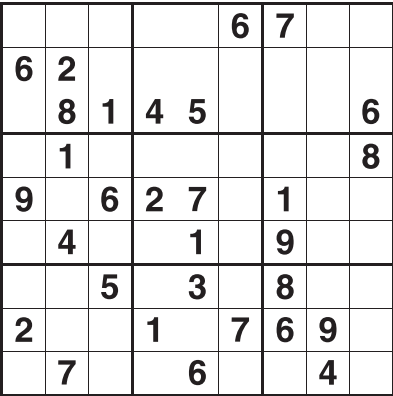
**SUKO**

Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct.



SUDOKU

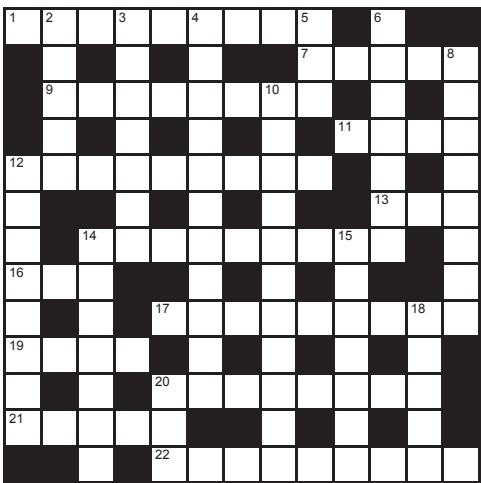
To enter, complete the Very Hard puzzle and call 0901 292 5275 (UK only) (R0 1516 303 500), leaving your answer (the numbers in the three shaded squares) and contact details. Or text SUNDAY2, followed by a space, then your answer (the three numbers) and contact details – eg SUNDAY2 12345678901234567890 – to 64343 (UK only). Calls cost £1.00 (R0 1151) plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. Winners will be picked at random from all correct answers received. Lines close at midnight on Saturday. If you call or text after this time you will not be entered but may be charged. When entering by phone or text, please provide your FULL name and address details, as incomplete entries may be charged but not entered. **STUCK?** Call our clue line to get four clues for the Very Hard puzzle. Text STUCK to 64343 (UK only). Calls cost £1 (R0 76c) plus your telephone company's network access charge. For full terms and conditions, visit thesundaytimes.co.uk/compures. Sp: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm)



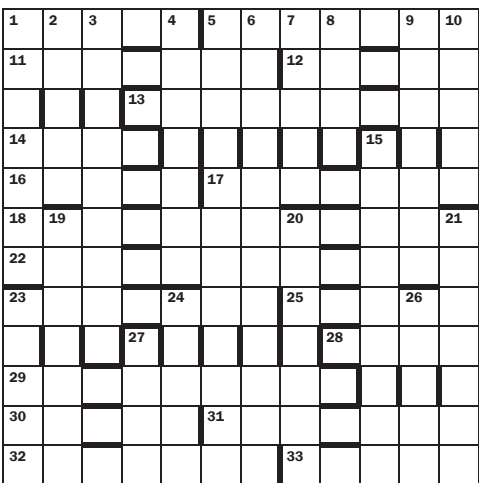
POLYGON

From these letters, make words of four or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the Concise Oxford Dictionary, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives.

How you rate
18 words, average; 24, good; 36, very good; 48, excellent.



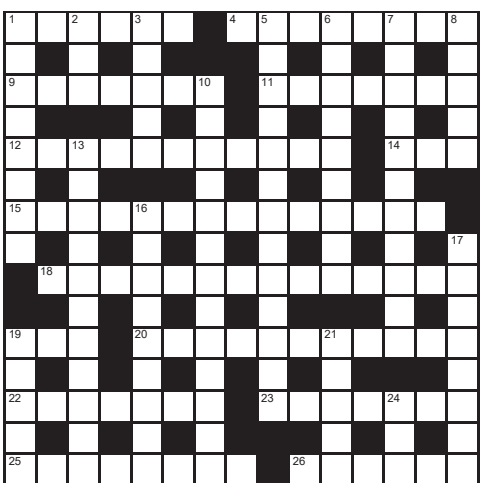
Paul McKenna



- 1 Penny looks and wrestles with God (5)
- 5 Dark gibe about enemy? (7)
- 1 Kiwi munchkin literally facing time to be still (7)
- 2 Eccentricity packing small screen part played by Hitchcock, say (5)
- 3 Mean to go about playing pool – it's never straightforward (9)
- 4 Maori settlements as focus of docusoap (4)
- 6 Hard word with name Calamus (5)
- 7 Tearing miss about to suffer historic simpers (7)
- 8 Mean shipmate winding up cranks (12)
- 2 Style used vaguely from Chaucer's noble mixed dialect (12, two words)
- 3 Ridiculous losing husband in ripped hat (7)
- 5 Station in Deolali turning over this auld wife's benefit (5)
- 8 Personnel handing over odd letters for redundant servant (4)
- 9 Judge, pretty much firm at first, backing a Greek island council (9, two words)
- 0 Whole hotel housing old Earl (5, two words)
- 1 Showing tone of deep and profound waste? (7)
- 2 Confused about scab being knocked off (7)
- 3 Section corporal split (5)

- 1 Pleasure getting tanned is leaving delicate scabs (7)
- 2 Occupied with bearing up noosed rope? (5)
- 3 Fantastic trip out in Yankee chopper, no matter what (9, three words)
- 4 Yah, back round accommodation of a middlingly U sort? (7)
- 5 Fellow with a way to restrain ruling politician on the left (12)
- 6 Fine guy to miss hovering first of rooms is house-trained (12)
- 7 Pips being 75 per cent sour and 50 per cent bad (5)
- 8 Gross post that's officially ordered? (4)
- 9 Forgotten vows in the guise of filling these somehow (7)
- 10 Holding tincture Scots lift up bowls (5)
- 11 Pen pun and a line's done (9)
- 12 Stuff up concerning independent radio (7)
- 13 Native doctors pack into farm in Provence, say (7)
- 14 Quiet French nut left Jewish community (7)
- 15 In Monaco you kiss a gorgeous girl perhaps (5)
- 16 Outside broadcast stream shows French item (5)
- 17 Cashier's reference possibly clearing second article (5)
- 18 Follow before finding personal prestige (4)

Dean Mayer

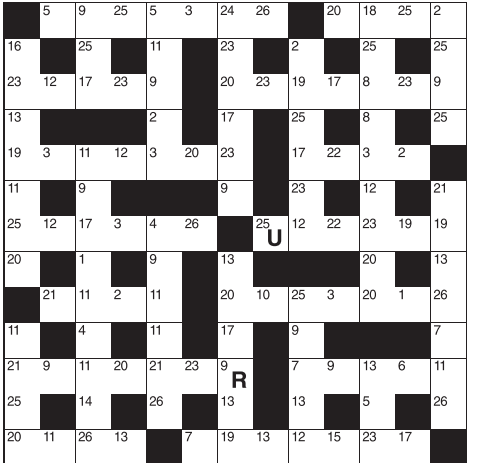


- 1 Musical climax (9)
- 7 Publish (5)
- 9 Light support (8)
- 11 Main point (4)
- 12 Traditional doctrine (9)
- 13 Enthusiast (3)
- 14 Deactivate (6,3)
- 16 Pain, colloquially (3)
- 17 Infamy (9)
- 19 Creep (4)
- 20 Transformation without size/shape change (8)
- 21 Dogsboddy (5)
- 22 Deport (9)

2 Straightedge (5)
3 Come what may (7)
4 Prompt (11)
5 Plump (3)
6 Diaphragm (7)
8 Classification (8)
0 Senior student (5-6)
12 Sociable (8)
14 Stipulate (7)
5 Passed out (7)
18 Assignment (5)
0 Wrath (3)

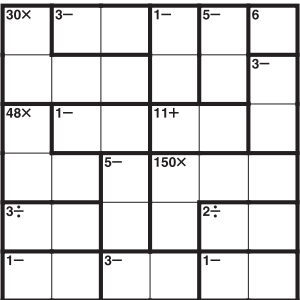
94	30	176	29
49	240	22	138
184	27	168	46
13	198	31	72

Each number in the main grid can be formed by adding or multiplying a pair of numbers in the strip below the grid. Each pair of numbers should be used twice: once as part of an addition and once as part of a multiplication. For example, a 10 and 24 in the main grid may be solved by the sums, $4 + 6$ and 4×6 , respectively. Enter each sum in the boxes below its answer. Any blanks in the strip must be deduced, bearing in mind the numbers are listed in ascending order.



In the grid, each number represents a letter of the alphabet – all 26 letters are used. Use the initial clues in the code table to work out the rest of the code.

STUCK? To get four random extra letter clues, call 0901 293 6266 (ROI 1514 415128) or text STCLUE to 64343 (UK only). Calls cost £1 (ROI 75c) plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (ROI 0818 205 403) (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).



CLUE WRITING CONTEST 1970: CORTINA

You are invited to write a clue for the word above, in our cryptic crossword style. The best entry selected after next Saturday wins a £25 Waterstones voucher. Email your entry to puzzle.entries@sunday-times.co.uk.

Winner 1967: Paul Kelsall, Barnard Castle, Co Durham
Candelabra: Light unit with support

For a full report, visit thesundaytimes.co.uk/cluewriting

NEWS REVIEW

Jeremy Clarkson

Does the red trouser mob speak fluent nimby? You better you bet



have some experience of not getting planning permission, and what I've come to understand is this: whether you want to build a conservatory, or a funeral home, or a nuclear power station, you've got to get the language right. Sustainable. That's an important word. Your conservatory may feature window frames made from depleted uranium, but that doesn't matter if you describe it as sustainable. And mental health. That's critical. You need a sustainable sun room full of eco-plants because it's good for your mental health. Plus you will empower the local building trade in a way that will be "transformative" to the low-income "community".

Sadly, however, no matter how well versed you may be in modern government-speak, you will come up against a neighbour in red trousers who knows the even more powerful language of nimbyism. And he's going to say that your new conservatory will cause more "pollution", "traffic" and "noise". That's the holy trinity for those who worship at the altar of Laura Ashley. And if that isn't working, they'll wheel out the trump card: dark skies. They'll argue that your new conservatory will cause light pollution, and then, I'm afraid, you've had it. Especially if there's even a suggestion that you might harm a bat.

All of which brings me on to the Duke of Beaufort. He recently applied for permission to stage two summer concerts in the agreeable grounds of Badminton House – the Who and Rod Stewart, in case you're interested. And I'm sure his representatives used all the right words.

They'll have glossed over the fact that it's bloody expensive to run a big house and new income streams are necessary, because that sort of argument doesn't sit well in a country where anyone with a

TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY IMAGES



big house is wrong. That's the law. So the duke's advisers will have relegated the business angle to page 12 of the application and concentrated instead on how the sustainable, low-impact, green events will empower the low-income rural community and boost the mental health of the region's bats.

Sadly, though, the duke's neighbours are not just well versed in the language of nimbyism. They are fluent – they are past masters – in the art of objecting. So they started by pointing out there'd be increased traffic in the area and that noise would "reverberate" in nearby villages – presumably causing many bat deaths and "mental health issues".

Naturally, they also said the concertgoers would engage in "rowdy behaviour", even though it's the Who and Rod Stewart we're talking about. Most of the audience will be in their

Fans of Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend will be heading home in their Teslas after the gig, not setting light to things

sixties, and when Roger Daltrey sings, "The kids are all right", they'll turn to one another and say, "They really are. Henry's a commodity broker now, and Harriet is doing ever so well at Freuds." Then, when it's all over, they'll go back to Stanton St Quintin in their Teslas, and Keith Moon will not head over to the local hostelrys to blow up the lavatories because he died 45 years ago.

Fearing perhaps the council might cotton on to the fact the audience are extremely unlikely to drive their cars into the nearest swimming pool, the red-trouser people decided then to open up with sustained machinegun fire. Crime. Disorder. Public nuisance. Emergency services. Road safety. Pandora's box. This was the Middle England playbook, and if they'd stuck to it, they might have got somewhere.

But they got high on their own supply and became silly, saying, "With 11 to 12 hours' drinking licences, drunks will camp overnight ... increasing the potential for a major fire incident."

Right. I see. So this 65-year-old reveller overdoes it on the noon balloons and the Whispering Angel, puts up a tent he's somehow smuggled into the venue and then, using some of the kindling he's brought from the wicker basket in his snug, gets a fire going, which, despite the constant rain that goes hand in hand with British summertime concerts, somehow turns into a major Australia-style inferno that completely engulfs three neighbouring villages and ruins the dark skies for miles.

It's the most preposterous argument I've ever heard. There was, once, a fire at an outdoor gig. It was caused by a faulty light on the stage and was quickly extinguished using stamping and a blanket. No one was injured and Bruno Mars was back at the mike eight minutes later. So the fire argument doesn't wash.

And I'm delighted to say the duke's

How would I like it if the Who played in a neighbour's garden? A lot

local authority saw it for the nonsense it was and gave the gigs the go-ahead. And before you write in saying, "How would you like it if your neighbour invited the Who to perform in his garden?", I'd say: "I'd like it a lot. Especially if they bring some lasers and do *Baba O'Riley*."

I fear, however, that this is not the end of the story, because now "sustainable" has been balanced out by "traffic", and "empowering" by "light pollution", the red-trouser brigade is going to become increasingly desperate in its constant battle to keep Britain as it was in 1957.

Mr Sunak announced recently that planners will be encouraged to look favourably on rural schemes, but they're going to be up against a tub-thumping army that will quickly recognise that the fire argument was a bit of an oxbow lake and will start to argue that the new housing estate for the low-income community will cause a plague of luminous locusts that will spoil the dark sky. Or that it will attract immigrants who all have ebola. And that your longed-for barn conversion is actually a Russian missile silo capable of turning all of Chipping Sodbury into a nuclear desert for the next 10,000 years.

30 years of Clarkson, Magazine, pages 16-21

TEASER 3166

Peter Good

All Their Marbles

In their art class, Jack and Jill each had a box of spherical glass marbles. Each box

contained marbles of at least three different sizes, and the radius of every marble was a whole number of cm. Jack placed three marbles of equal size from his box onto a desk, and placed each of the others in turn on top so that all four marbles touched each other and formed a triangular

pyramid. He worked out the height of each pyramid (from desk to top of top marble) and obtained a different whole number of cm each time. Jill was also able to do this with her marbles but they were all of different sizes to Jack's. None of the pyramids was higher than 30cm.

List all of the different marble radii in ascending order.

Send your solution to: The Sunday Times Teaser 3166, PO Box 29, Colchester, Essex CO2 8GZ or email puzzle.enties@sunday-times.co.uk. The first two correct solutions opened after next Saturday each win a £20 Waterstones voucher. Open to 18+ UK & ROI residents only.

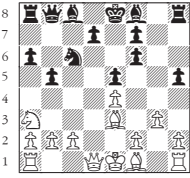
CHESS

David Howell

"Modern chess is too much concerned with things like pawn structure. Forget it. Checkmate ends the game."

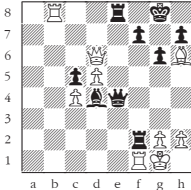
I am reminded of this quote by Nigel Short every time I see a wild game in which players neglect long-term strategic principles in favour of short-term dynamism.

The 19-year-old grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi displayed refreshing creativity on his way to winning a strong tournament in the United Arab Emirates. **White:** Vladislav Kovalev **Black:** Arjun Erigaisi **Sharjah Masters 2023 Sicilian Defence** **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nc6 5 Nc3 Qc7 6 g3 h5 7 Ndb5 Qb8 8 Bf4 e5 9 Be3 a6 10 Na3 b5 11 Nd5 Nf6** The first sign that Erigaisi has more on his mind than mere pawn structure. **12 Nxf6+ gxf6**



Black has already made several committal decisions. White's next move, however, underestimates the opponent's dynamic potential. **13 h4** A generally desirable inclusion, fixing the isolated pawn on h5, but there were more urgent

priorities. **13 Nb1** improves White's worst-placed piece, aiming to jump into d5 via c3. **13...f5!** The first in a series of highly energetic moves. **14 exf5 Bb7 15 Rg1?** Forgoing the right to castle. **15 Bg2 Nd4 16 O-O Bxg2 17 Kxg2 Qb7+ 18 f3 Nxf5 19 Qd3** keeps the king safe and leads to equality. **15...d5 16 c3?** Alas **16 Qxd5 Nd4** traps the white queen. **16 Bg2** was advisable. **16...d4! 17 cxd4 Bb4+ 18 Ke2 18 Bd2 Bxd2+ 19 Qxd2 Nxd4** threatens a powerful fork on f3. **18...exd4 19 Bf4 Bd6 20 Bg5 f6!** Speed over everything. Black gains a vital tempo. **21 Bxf6 O-O 22 Qd2** There is no time to retreat. **22 Bg5 Qe8+ 23 Kd2 Bb4+ 24 Kc1 Rc8** will end in disaster for White. **22...Rxf6 23 Qg5+ Kf7 24 Qxh5+ Ke7 25 Bg2 Bxa3 26 Qh7+ Rf7 27 f6+ Ke8 28 Qg8+ Bf8 29 Rge1 Rxf6 30 Kf1+ Ne7** White's desperate counterattack has failed. The material deficit is decisive. **31 Rxe7+ Kxe7 32 Qh7+ Kd8 33 Bxb7 Ra7 34 Qh8 Qe5 35 Bf3 Qf5** White resigns **Spot the Move 1377:** White to play.



Variation from Abdusattorov-Van Foreest, chess.com 2023. In a mutual race to the enemy king, how can White ensure that his attack arrives first?

Send your solution (first move only), to Sunday Times Spot the Move 1377, The Sunday Times, PO Box 29, Colchester, Essex CO2 8GZ, or email to puzzle.enties@sunday-times.co.uk. The first correct answer drawn after next Saturday wins a £20 Waterstones voucher. Open to 18+ UK & ROI residents only.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS

SUDOKU WARM-UP

2	1	7	6	3	5	8	4	9
6	4	8	1	9	7	3	5	2
3	9	5	4	2	8	6	7	1
9	7	4	2	5	3	1	8	6
1	5	3	7	8	6	9	2	4
8	6	2	9	4	1	5	3	7
7	8	6	5	1	4	2	9	3
5	2	1	3	7	9	4	6	8
4	3	9	8	6	2	7	1	5

CODEWORD







Across: 1 **S**OURPUSS 2 **I**RIS 3 **O**CEAN 4 **A**LB 5 **U**NF 6 **T** 7 **C** 8 **A** 9 **B**OU 10 **I**RE 11 **N**ODIE 12 **D**ROP 13 **C**ANNO 14 **E** 15 **N**OLAN 16 **M**EMORY 17 **E**TH 18 **T** 19 **M** 20 **R** 21 **M** 22 **R** 23 **C** 24 **H** 25 **R** 26 **L** 27 **I** 28 **A** 29 **M** 30 **L** 31 **I** 32 **A** 33 **R** 34 **O** 35 **M** 36 **E** 37 **S** 38 **G** 39 **A** 40 **C** 41 **T** 42 **A** 43 **H** 44 **L** 45 **L** 46 **L** 47 **A** 48 **M** 49 **M** 50 **Z** 51 **E** 52 **E** 53 **A** 54 **C** 55 **T** 56 **A** 57 **L** 58 **L** 59 **M** 60 **M** 61 **Z** 62 **E** 63 **A** 64 **C** 65 **T** 66 **A** 67 **L** 68 **L** 69 **M** 70 **M** 71 **Z** 72 **E** 73 **A** 74 **C** 75 **T** 76 **A** 77 **L** 78 **L** 79 **M** 80 **M** 81 **Z** 82 **E** 83 **A** 84 **C** 85 **T** 86 **A** 87 **L** 88 **L** 89 **M** 90 **M** 91 **Z** 92 **E** 93 **A** 94 **C** 95 **T** 96 **A** 97 **L** 98 **L** 99 **M** 100 **M** 101 **Z** 102 **E** 103 **A** 104 **C** 105 **T** 106 **A** 107 **L** 108 **L** 109 **M** 110 **M** 111 **Z** 112 **E** 113 **A** 114 **C** 115 **T** 116 **A** 117 **L** 118 **L** 119 **M** 120 **M** 121 **Z** 122 **E** 123 **A** 124 **C** 125 **T** 126 **A** 127 **L** 128 **L** 129 **M** 130 **M** 131 **Z** 132 **E** 133 **A** 134 **C** 135 **T** 136 **A** 137 **L** 138 **L** 139 **M** 140 **M** 141 **Z** 142 **E** 143 **A** 144 **C** 145 **T** 146 **A** 147 **L** 148 **L** 149 **M** 150 **M** 151 **Z** 152 **E** 153 **A** 154 **C** 155 **T** 156 **A** 157 **L** 158 **L** 159 **M** 160 **M** 161 **Z** 162 **E** 163 **A** 164 **C** 165 **T** 166 **A** 167 **L** 168 **L** 169 **M** 170 **M** 171 **Z** 172 **E** 173 **A** 174 **C** 175 **T** 176 **A** 177 **L** 178 **L** 179 **M** 180 **M** 181 **Z** 182 **E** 183 **A** 184 **C** 185 **T** 186 **A** 187 **L** 188 **L** 189 **M** 190 **M** 191 **Z** 192 **E** 193 **A** 194 **C** 195 **T** 196 **A** 197 **L** 198 **L** 199 **M** 200 **M** 201 **Z** 202 **E** 203 **A** 204 **C** 205 **T** 206 **A** 207 **L** 208 **L** 209 **M** 210 **M** 211 **Z** 212 **E** 213 **A** 214 **C** 215 **T** 216 **A** 217 **L** 218 **L** 219 **M** 220 **M** 221 **Z** 222 **E** 223 **A** 224 **C** 225 **T** 226 **A** 227 **L** 228 **L** 229 **M** 230 **M** 231 **Z** 232 **E** 233 **A** 234 **C** 235 **T** 236 **A** 237 **L** 238 **L** 239 **M** 240 **M** 241 **Z** 242 **E** 243 **A** 244 **C** 245 **T** 246 **A** 247 **L** 248 **L** 249 **M** 250 **M** 251 **Z** 252 **E** 253 **A** 254 **C** 255 **T** 256 **A** 257 **L** 258 **L** 259 **M** 260 **M** 261 **Z** 262 **E** 263 **A** 264 **C** 265 **T** 266 **A** 267 **L** 268 **L** 269 **M** 270 **M** 271 **Z** 272 **E** 273 **A** 274 **C** 275 **T** 276 **A** 277 **L** 278 **L** 279 **M** 280 **M** 281 **Z** 282 **E** 283 **A** 284 **C** 285 **T** 286 **A** 287 **L** 288 **L** 289 **M** 290 **M** 291 **Z** 292 **E** 293 **A** 294 **C** 295 **T** 296 **A** 297 **L** 298 **L** 299 **M** 300 **M** 301 **Z** 302 **E** 303 **A** 304 **C** 305 **T** 306 **A** 307 **L** 308 **L** 309 **M** 310 **M** 311 **Z** 312 **E** 313 **A** 314 **C** 315 **T** 316 **A** 317 **L** 318 **L** 319 **M** 320 **M** 321 **Z** 322 **E** 323 **A** 324 **C** 325 **T** 326 **A** 327 **L** 328 **L** 329 **M** 330 **M** 331 **Z** 332 **E** 333 **A** 334 **C** 335 **T** 336 **A** 337 **L** 338 **L** 339 **M** 340 **M** 341 **Z** 342 **E** 343 **A** 344 **C** 345 **T** 346 **A** 347 **L** 348 **L** 349 **M** 350 **M** 351 **Z** 352 **E** 353 **A** 354 **C** 355 **T** 356 **A** 357 **L** 358 **L** 359 **M** 360 **M** 361 **Z** 362 **E** 363 **A** 364 **C** 365 **T** 366 **A** 367 **L** 368 **L** 369 **M** 370 **M** 371 **Z** 372 **E** 373 **A** 374 **C** 375 **T** 376 **A** 377 **L** 378 **L** 379 **M** 380 **M** 381 **Z** 382 **E** 383 **A** 384 **C** 385 **T** 386 **A** 387 **L** 388 **L** 389 **M** 390 **M** 391 **Z** 392 **E** 393 **A** 394 **C** 395 **T** 396 **A** 397 **L** 398 **L** 399 **M** 400 **M** 401 **Z** 402 **E** 403 **A** 404 **C** 405 **T** 406 **A** 407 **L** 408 **L** 409 **M** 410 **M** 411 **Z** 412 **E** 413 **A** 414 **C** 415 **T** 416 **A** 417 **L** 418 **L** 419 **M** 420 **M** 421 **Z** 422 **E** 423 **A** 424 **C** 425 **T** 426 **A** 427 **L** 428 **L** 429 **M** 430 **M** 431 **Z** 432 **E** 433 **A** 434 **C** 435 **T** 436 **A** 437 **L** 438 **L** 439 **M** 440 **M** 441 **Z** 442 **E** 443 **A** 444 **C** 445 **T** 446 **A** 447 **L** 448 **L** 449 **M** 450 **M** 451 **Z** 452 **E** 453 **A** 454 **C** 455 **T** 456 **A** 457 **L** 458 **L** 459 **M** 460 **M** 461 **Z** 462 **E** 463 **A** 464 **C** 465 **T** 466 **A** 467 **L** 468 **L** 469 **M** 470 **M** 471 **Z** 472 **E** 473 **A** 474 **C** 475 **T** 476 **A** 477 **L** 478 **L** 479 **M** 480 **M** 481 **Z** 482 **E** 483 **A** 484 **C** 485 **T** 486 **A** 487 **L** 488 **L** 489 **M** 490 **M** 491 **Z** 492 **E** 493 **A** 494 **C** 495 **T** 496 **A** 497 **L** 498 **L** 499 **M** 500 **M** 501 **Z** 502 **E** 503 **A** 504 **C** 505 **T** 506 **A** 507 **L** 508 **L** 509 **M** 510 **M** 511 **Z** 512 **E** 513 **A** 514 **C** 515 **T** 516 **A** 517 **L** 518 **L** 519 **M** 520 **M** 521 **Z** 522 **E** 523 **A** 524 **C** 525 **T** 526 **A** 527 **L** 528 **L** 529 **M** 530 **M** 531 **Z** 532 **E** 533 **A** 534 **C** 535 **T** 536 **A** 537 **L** 538 **L** 539 **M** 540 **M** 541 **Z** 542 **E** 543 **A** 544 **C** 545 **T** 546 **A** 547 **L** 548 **L** 549 **M** 550 **M** 551 **Z** 552 **E** 553 **A** 554 **C** 555 **T** 556 **A** 557 **L** 558 **L** 559 **M** 560 **M** 561 **Z** 562 **E** 563 **A** 564 **C** 565 **T** 566 **A** 567 **L** 568 **L** 569 **M** 570 **M** 571 **Z** 572 **E** 573 **A** 574 **C** 575 **T** 576 **A** 577 **L** 578 **L** 579 **M** 580 **M** 581 **Z** 582 **E** 583 **A** 584 **C** 585 **T** 586 **A** 587 **L** 588 **L** 589 **M** 590 **M** 591 **Z** 592 **E** 593 **A** 594 **C** 595 **T** 596 **A** 597 **L** 598 **L** 599 **M** 600 **M** 601 **Z** 602 **E** 603 **A** 604 **C** 605 **T** 606 **A** 607 **L** 608 **L** 609 **M** 610 **M** 611 **Z** 612 **E** 613 **A** 614 **C** 615 **T** 616 **A** 617 **L** 618 **L** 619 **M** 620 **M** 621 **Z** 622 **E** 623 **A** 624 **C** 625 **T** 626 **A** 627 **L** 628 **L** 629 **M** 630 **M** 631 **Z** 632 **E** 633 **A** 634 **C** 635 **T** 636 **A** 637 **L** 638 **L** 639 **M** 640 **M** 641 **Z** 642 **E** 643 **A** 644 **C** 645 **T** 646 **A** 647 **L** 648 **L** 649 **M** 650 **M** 651 **Z** 652 **E** 653 **A** 654 **C** 655 **T** 656 **A** 657 **L** 658 **L** 659 **M** 660 **M** 661 **Z** 662 **E** 663 **A** 664 **C** 665 **T** 666 **A** 667 **L** 668 **L** 669 **M** 670 **M** 671 **Z** 672 **E** 673 **A** 674 **C** 675 **T** 676 **A** 677 **L** 678 **L** 679 **M** 680 **M** 681 **Z** 682 **E** 683 **A** 684 **C** 685 **T** 686 **A** 687 **L** 688 **L** 689 **M** 690 **M** 691 **Z** 692 **E** 693 **A** 694 **C** 695 **T** 696 **A** 697 **L** 698 **L** 699 **M** 700 **M** 701 **Z** 702 **E** 703 **A** 704 **C** 705 **T** 706 **A** 707 **L** 708 **L** 709 **M** 710 **M** 711 **Z** 712 **E** 713 **A** 714 **C** 715 **T** 716 **A** 717 **L** 718 **L** 719 **M** 720 **M** 721 **Z** 722 **E** 723 **A** 724 **C** 725 **T** 726 **A** 727 **L** 728 **L** 729 **M** 730 **M** 731 **Z** 732 **E** 733 **A** 734 **C** 735 **T** 736 **A** 737 **L** 738 **L** 739 **M** 740 **M** 741 **Z** 742 **E** 743 **A** 744 **C** 745 **T** 746 **A** 747 **L** 748 **L** 749 **M** 750 **M** 751 **Z** 752 **E** 753 **A** 754 **C** 755 **T** 756 **A** 757 **L** 758 **L** 759 **M** 760 **M** 761 **Z** 762 **E** 763 **A** 764 **C** 765 **T** 766 **A** 767 **L** 768 **L** 769 **M** 770 **M** 771 **Z** 772 **E** 773 **A** 774 **C** 775 **T** 776 **A** 777 **L** 778 **L** 779 **M** 780 **M** 781 **Z** 782 **E** 783 **A** 784 **C** 785 **T** 786 **A** 787 **L** 788 **L** 789 **M** 790 **M** 791 **Z** 792 **E** 793 **A** 794 **C** 795 **T** 796 **A** 797 **L** 798 **L** 799 **M** 800 **M** 801 **Z** 802 **E** 803 **A** 804 **C** 805 **T** 806 **A** 807 **L** 808 **L** 809 **M** 810 **M** 811 **Z** 812 **E** 813 **A** 814 **C** 815 **T** 816 **A** 817 **L** 818 **L** 819 **M** 820 **M** 821 **Z**

VICTORY TRAVELS IN LOUIS VUITTON



FORMULA 1
GRAND PRIX
DE MONACO
2023

LOUIS VUITTON

Your holiday is ABTA and ATOL protected when you book with Imagine Cruising.  Trustpilot
  Fully protected  Amazing value  Exceptional service and expertise  Excellent

 **TIMES** Travel Offers

A World of Wonder Awaits...

17 OFFERS
INSIDE FROM
JUN, 2023 -
JAN, 2025

**IMAGINE
CRUISING**
MORE THAN JUST A CRUISE.

**IMAGINE
HOLIDAYS**
MORE THAN JUST A HOLIDAY.

For Imagine Cruising bookings call
 **0808 115 0646**

 thetimes.co.uk/imagine

For Imagine Holidays bookings call
 **0808 134 9526**

 thetimes.co.uk/imagineholidays

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

 **ABTA**
ABTANo.Y6300 

 Trustpilot 

 **TIMES** Travel Offers

**27 NIGHTS
FROM
£5,999^{PP}**

Ultimate South America with Iguazu Falls and Machu Picchu

The **Celebrity Eclipse®** Experience

The Celebrity Eclipse® is a masterpiece of design, bringing together all the best features of modern cruising with a sublime ease. Celebrity Eclipse® includes favourites that regular passengers have found so appealing on its sister ships, like the manicured real grass expanse in the Lawn Club area as well as a full array of facilities, dining options and fun activities that any passenger could wish for.

Celebrity **X** Cruises®

**LIMITED
AVAILABILITY**

**27 Nights
Departing March 7, 2024**

This *amazing* holiday includes:

All-Inclusive Cruise

12 night all-inclusive cruise on board
Celebrity Eclipse®

Classic Drinks Package, Wi-Fi and Tips

Visiting: Valparaíso, Chilean Fjords (scenic cruising), Strait of Magellan (scenic cruising), Punta Arenas, Ushuaia, Cape Horn (scenic cruising), Puerto Madryn, Montevideo, Buenos Aires

Fully Escorted Tours

Complimentary Palomino Islands tour

Sacred Valley tour including:

Salt Mines of Maras, Moray and Ollantaytambo Ruins, Machu Picchu tour and Buenos Aires city tour

Walking tour of Iguazu Falls including both the

Brazilian and Argentinian sides of the falls

Tour of Christ the Redeemer

Hotel Stays

Four-star hotel stays in Lima, Cusco, Santiago, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro with breakfast

Five-star hotel stays in Iguazu and Sacred Valley with breakfast

All Flights and Transfers

(London departure)

INSIDE from
£5,999^{PP}

OCEAN VIEW from
£6,499^{PP}

VERANDA from
£6,999^{PP}

CONCIERGE CLASS from
£7,799^{PP}



ONLINE CRUISE CODE: AME7596

Embrace South America's awe-inspiring landscapes, fascinating culture and diverse attractions, during a luxurious Celebrity voyage and unforgettable tours.

Your thrilling South America holiday begins with a two-night hotel stay in Lima, complete with a wonderful city tour and unforgettable Palomino Island tour, where you'll be gifted close encounters of sea lions. You'll then explore the fascinating Incan ruins of the Sacred Valley and savour a tour of Machu Picchu, an awe-inspiring ancient city perched on a mountaintop.

Following a one-night hotel stay in Santiago, your adventure continues as you embark the exceptional Celebrity Eclipse® for a voyage brimming with bustling cities, jaw-dropping waterways, and icy landscapes. Highlights of your cruise include Puerto Madryn, a city known for its gorgeous wildlife and stunning landscapes; picturesque Ushuaia, nestled at the southern tip of South America, and a scenic cruise through the stunning channels of the Strait of Magellan.

You'll disembark in Buenos Aires and spend three nights soaking up its vibrancy and breathing in its fusion of European and Latin culture. A three-night hotel stay in Iguazu follows. Here, you'll embrace two fully escorted tours of the misty Iguazu Falls from both its Brazilian and Argentinian sides. As you traverse this iconic sight, you'll marvel at the striking landscapes, fascinating wildlife, and tepid rainforests that encompass it.

A two-night hotel stay in Brazil's vivid and colourful capital city, Rio de Janeiro, awaits, paired with a tour that includes a visit to the embracing Christ the Redeemer statue which overlooks the city.



Discover the incredible Iguazu Falls

Marvel at the largest waterfall system in the world, bordered by lush vegetation, looped with walking trails. Surrounded by tropical rainforest where colourful toucans reside, you'll be accompanied by the distant roar of one of the most spectacular waterfalls in the world.

You'll get to experience the Iguazu Falls from both the Brazilian and Argentinian sides and get right up close to this magnificent spectacle, comprised of more than 275 falls, the tallest of which towers more than 82 metres high.

**IMAGINE
CRUISING**
MORE THAN JUST A CRUISE.



For Imagine Cruising bookings call

0808 115 0646

thetimes.co.uk/imagine

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

TIMES Travel Offers

**24 NIGHTS
FROM
£8,999^{PP}**

Silversea luxury voyage, all-inclusive Blue Train and Victoria Falls discovery



Luxury cruise on board *Silver Spirit*

Silversea's luxury cruise ship, *Silver Spirit*, blends first class facilities with eight desirable dining venues and polished entertainment, providing a truly superior way to cruise. While on board you could discover exquisite dishes bursting with Asian essence at Indochine, meet new friends at Dolce Vita, or unwind in the Zagara Spa. You'll find personalised service and gracious hospitality, included in your all-inclusive luxury cruise.

SILVERSEA®

**SAVE UP TO
£3,000
PER COUPLE[^]**

**LIMITED TO ONLY
50 GUESTS**

24 Nights

Departing January 29, 2025

This *amazing* holiday includes:

All-Inclusive Cruise

15 night all-inclusive luxury cruise on board *Silver Spirit*
Complimentary premium shore excursions included at every port*

Visiting: Cape Town, Lüderitz, Walvis Bay (overnight in port), Port Elizabeth (overnight in port), East London, Richards Bay, Durban, Cape Town

Rail Journeys

Two-night all-inclusive luxury Blue Train journey from Pretoria to Cape Town with an off-train excursion

Royal Livingstone Express train journey including a five-course dinner and drinks

Fully Escorted Tours

Walking tour of Victoria Falls
Lady Livingstone river safari

Luxury Hotel Stays

Five-star hotel stays in Johannesburg, Livingstone, Pretoria & Cape Town all including breakfast

All Flights and Transfers

London departure - regional flights available

VISTA SUITE *from*
£8,999^{PP}

CLASSIC VERANDA SUITE *from*
£9,999^{PP}

SUPERIOR VERANDA SUITE *from*
£10,299^{PP}

DELUXE VERANDA SUITE *from*
£10,499^{PP}

*Offer includes one excursion per guest, per port/day. Additional excursions available at an extra charge. ^Prices shown include discount and savings based on two passengers sharing a Deluxe Veranda Suite.



ONLINE CRUISE CODE: AFR7298

Join *Silver Spirit* for a luxury cruise to uncover Africa's spectacles, paired with an enchanting Victoria Falls tour and charming Blue Train journey.

After a hotel stay in Johannesburg, you'll transfer to The Royal Livingstone Victoria Falls Zambia Hotel by Anantara for an opulent three-night stay. Blending in harmoniously with its surroundings, it's located close to the magnificent Victoria Falls which you'll see up close by rail, boat and on foot during a trio of immersive tours. A guided walking tour lets you walk amidst the lush rainforest, encountering increasingly spectacular view of the falls and a tranquil sunset cruise will transport you along the calm waters of the Zambezi River. From river to rails, your final tour in Victoria Falls sees you enjoy a fine dining experience on board the Royal Livingstone Express.

Following an overnight in Pretoria, the luxury Blue Train then awaits. An iconic rail experience, this all-inclusive voyage embodies style, class and elegance; from your indulgent suite to the Cordon Blue-style dining using the finest, local ingredients. As you absorb gorgeous grasslands and marvellous mountain views - including a stop in fascinating Kimberley - before disembarking in Cape Town for a two-night stay.

You'll then embark the peerless *Silver Spirit*, entering Namibia through Lüderitz and glimpsing native wildlife with overnights in port in abundant Walvis Bay and charming Port Elizabeth. In East London, you'll then encounter the enthralling Nguni culture before exploring idyllic Richards Bay and eclectic Durban. Finally, you'll disembark in cosmopolitan Cape Town ahead of your flight home.



Luxury rail journey Blue Train

On this unforgettable journey, immerse yourself in luxury on board the Blue Train, passing through Africa's diverse scenery.

From your indulgent suite, opulent marble bathroom, and sumptuous bedding to the Cordon Bleu-style dining prepared using the finest local ingredients, served on delicate dinnerware, this all-inclusive journey embodies style, class, and elegance. Come evening, you'll unwind in your decadent vintage wooden cabin and sumptuous furnishings.

**IMAGINE
CRUISING**
MORE THAN JUST A CRUISE.



Trustpilot ★★★★★

For Imagine Cruising bookings call

0808 115 0646

thetimes.co.uk/imagine

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

TIMES Travel Offers

**24 - 27 NIGHTS
FROM
£3,899^{PP}***

Taj Mahal, the Himalayas and all-inclusive Celebrity voyage



The **Celebrity Millennium®** Experience

Delightful design, with clever use of natural light throughout its public areas, enhances the stunningly attractive ambience of this beautiful cruise ship and promotes an atmosphere of calm openness from the moment you board. The Celebrity Millennium® oozes sophistication and is a superb choice for those looking for a refined and elegant cruise with all the modern facilities you could imagine.

Celebrity X Cruises®

**12 NIGHT FIVE-STAR
FULLY ESCORTED GOLDEN
TRIANGLE TOUR AND
SCENIC RAIL JOURNEY**

**CLASSIC DRINKS, WI-FI
& TIPS INCLUDED**

**24 - 27 Nights
Departing Nov, 2024 - Feb, 2025**

This *amazing* holiday includes:

All-Inclusive Cruise

14 night all-inclusive cruise on board
Celebrity Millennium®

Classic Drinks Package, Wi-Fi and Tips

Visiting*: Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Phuket,
Hambantota, Colombo, Cochin, Goa, Mumbai

Fully Escorted Tours

Tour of the Taj Mahal and Agra Fort, game drives
through Ranthambore National Park, tour of Amber
Fort by Jeep, Hawa Mahal and the City Palace, trail walk
through the Himalayas, Shimla sightseeing city tour and
a tour of Jama Masjid Mosque, Red Fort and Rajgha

Rail Journeys

Shatabdi Express to and from Kalka and a one day rail
journey from Kalka to Shimla on board the Shimla
Toy Train

Hotel Stays

Four-star hotel stays in Delhi, Agra, Ranthambore
National Park, Jaipur and Shimla
All hotel stays include breakfast

All Flights and Transfers

(London departure - regional flights available)

INSIDE *from**
£3,899^{PP}

OCEAN VIEW *from**
£4,399^{PP}

VERANDA *from**
£4,899^{PP}

CONCIERGE CLASS *from**
£5,399^{PP}

AQUACLASS® *from**
£6,299^{PP}

*Prices, duration and itinerary are based on November 22, 2024
departure date. ^Wildlife sightings are not guaranteed.



ONLINE CRUISE CODE: ASA7764

Marvel at the awe-inspiring wonders of India's famed Golden Triangle during a fully escorted tour, a magical safari experience and an unforgettable rail journey through the Himalayas before an all-inclusive cruise on board Celebrity Millennium®.

Your holiday begins in Singapore for a one-night hotel stay before you'll embark the magnificent Celebrity Millennium® for your refined cruise. Highlights of your voyage include Thailand's idyllic Phuket, an island renowned for its beaches hugged by coconut palms and vibrant coral reefs. You'll also stop in nature-filled Hambantota and laid-back Goa, a picturesque state nestled on the southwestern coast of India.

Disembarking in Mumbai, you'll enjoy an overnight in port before you'll explore India's iconic treasures during a fully escorted tour of the Golden Triangle. You'll begin in enigmatic Delhi and discover its multi-layered history and street life before reaching Agra. Here, you'll encounter India's most iconic landmark, the resplendent Taj Mahal, a true architectural feat of white marble.

A two-night adventure in the thrilling Ranthambore National Park then awaits, where you'll embark on jungle safari drives. From your open-topped car, you'll search for some of India's most elusive wildlife, from regal Bengal tigers to Indian rhinoceros.

During a two-night hotel stay in the 'Pink City' of Jaipur, you'll explore the beguiling Amber Fort before you'll relish scintillating Delhi once more for an overnight hotel stay. Taking the Shatabdi Express to Kalka, you'll connect to the Shimla Express for a three-night hotel stay in Shimla, exploring the Himalayas on a walking trail, before transferring back to Delhi.



Discover Ranthambore National Park

Centred around the impressive
10th-century Ranthambore Fort,
Ranthambore National Park is
home to an enthralling scattering
of old mosques, temples, hunting
pavilions and a wealth of diverse
flora and fauna.

The park's dry deciduous forests and
grasslands establish Ranthambore
one of the best national parks in
India. Here you'll enjoy an immersive
stay to embark on thrilling jungle
safari in pursuit of sightings of
leopards, boars, hyenas, sloth bears,
rhesus macaques, and of course,
regal Bengal tigers^.

**IMAGINE
CRUISING**
MORE THAN JUST A CRUISE.



Trustpilot ★★★★★

For Imagine Cruising bookings call

0808 115 0646

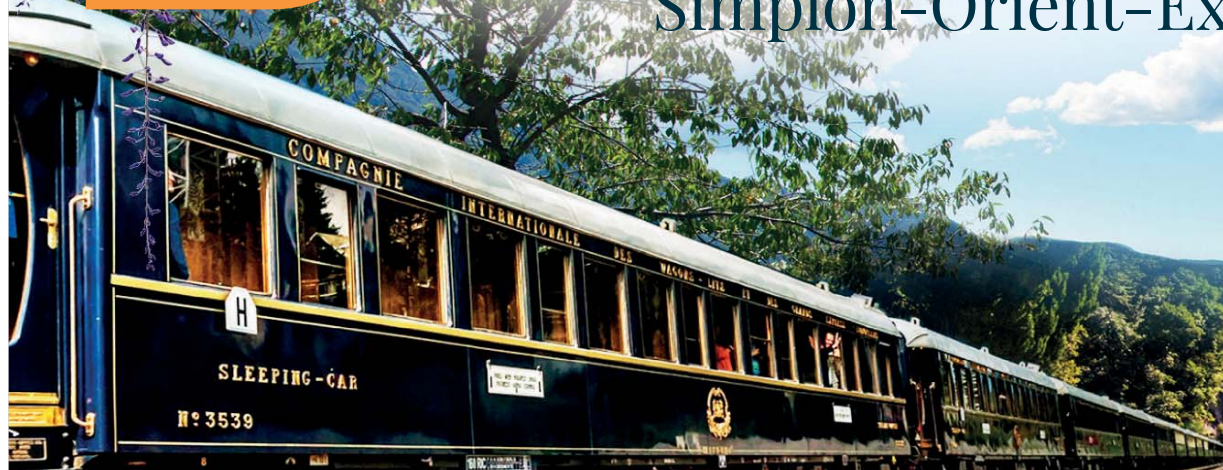
thetimes.co.uk/imagine

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

TIMES Travel Offers

**19 NIGHTS
FROM
£5,999^{PP}**

No-fly luxury Cunard voyage, Italian Lakes and all-inclusive Venice Simplon-Orient-Express



Board the regal Queen Victoria

There's something distinctly refined and regal about a Cunard cruise and the beautiful Queen Victoria certainly upholds the fine traditions of this luxury line. Even before you board this beautiful ship you'll note the trademark black and red livery which, together with her sleek modern design, immediately sets the theme of proud cruising heritage married with innovative features for today's cruise guests.



CUNARD

**SAVE UP TO
£3,600
PER COUPLE***

COMPLIMENTARY EIGHT-NIGHT FULLY ESCORTED ITALIAN LAKES TOURS

**19 Nights
Departing May 5, 2024**

This *amazing* holiday includes:

Full-Board Cruise

Eight-night full-board cruise on board Queen Victoria

Complimentary Oceanview to Balcony upgrade

Visiting: Southampton, Cádiz, Málaga, Palma de Mallorca, Civitavecchia

Rail Journeys

Complimentary scenic rail journey on board the Bernina Express

Two-day all-inclusive luxury Venice Simplon-Orient-Express train journey from Verona to Paris
Standard Premier Eurostar rail journey from Paris to London

Hotel Stays

Two-night four-star stay in Florence
Complimentary four-star hotel stays in Lake Maggiore, Lake Como and Lake Garda
All hotel stays include breakfast

All Transfers

INSIDE from
£5,999^{PP}

OCEANVIEW from
£6,999^{PP}

BALCONY from
£6,999^{PP}

GRILL SUITE from
£8,999^{PP}

*Prices include discount and savings based on two passengers sharing a Grill Suite.



ONLINE CRUISE CODE: MED7689

Embark Cunard's elegant Queen Victoria, delve into the wondrous Italian Lakes, and savour a timeless journey on board the Luxury Venice Simplon-Orient-Express.

You'll begin your enchanting holiday in Southampton and embark the peerless Queen Victoria. Throughout your cruise, you'll relish luxurious cabins, gourmet dining, and grand ballrooms in between calls to Europe's most charming destinations. You'll stop in the richly diverse city of Cádiz; cultural Málaga – the birthplace of famous artists including Picasso – and picturesque Palma de Mallorca, where you could indulge in delicious tapas before strolling the city's charming streets.

Next, you'll disembark in Civitavecchia and explore Florence's centuries-old architecture during a two-night stay and next, enjoy scenic waterfront walks during your tour Italian Lakes trio experience.

In Lake Maggiore, you'll encounter vibrant villages and savour sumptuous Italian cuisine before transferring to vivid Lake Como – set against the backdrop of the Rhaetian Alps. Here, you'll experience stunning mountain scenery on the Bernina Express as you travel to St. Moritz. Next, in charming Lake Garda, you'll relish a three-night hotel stay and explore its narrow cobbled streets, gaze up at decadent Renaissance architecture, and stroll through its verdant gardens.

You'll then transfer to Verona and embark the luxurious Venice Simplon-Orient-Express. During your journey to Paris, you'll indulge in exceptional cuisine – prepared using the finest regional ingredients – with a three-course lunch. You could then savour a refreshing drink at the champagne bar before you'll conclude your journey in Paris and return home on board the Eurostar.



Relax on board Venice Simplon-Orient-Express

The Venice Simplon-Orient-Express is a highly sought-after luxury train journey that offers an immersive experience echoing the golden age of travel. With opulent décor, gourmet dining, and unparalleled service, this journey takes you through Europe's most stunning landscapes.

Iconic carriages, timeless elegance, and attention to detail make it an unforgettable experience – it's no wonder that this train is considered one of the most luxurious in the world.

**IMAGINE
CRUISING**
MORE THAN JUST A CRUISE.



Trustpilot ★★★★★

For Imagine Cruising bookings call
0808 115 0646

thetimes.co.uk/imagine

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

TIMES Travel Offers

Luxury Cunard voyage from Sydney to Singapore



SAVE UP TO
£2,500
PER COUPLE*



QUEEN MARY 2

28 Nights from £2,799^{pp}
Departing February 25, 2024

This amazing holiday includes:

Full-Board Cruise

25 night full-board cruise on board Queen Mary 2

Visiting: Sydney, Cairns, Darwin, Bitung, Hong Kong (overnight in port), Chan May, Nha Trang, Ho Chi Minh City, Singapore (overnight in port)

Complimentary Hotel Stays

Two-night four-star hotel stay in Sydney at the Rydges World Square

One-night five-star hotel stay in Singapore at the Grand Park City Hall

All hotel stays include breakfast

Complimentary Flights and Transfers

(London departure - regional flights available)

COMPLIMENTARY FLIGHTS AND HOTEL STAYS IN SYDNEY AND SINGAPORE

PRICES FROM

INSIDE	OCEANVIEW	BALCONY	GRILL SUITE
£2,799 ^{pp}	£3,499 ^{pp}	£3,899 ^{pp}	£9,499 ^{pp}



ONLINE CRUISE CODE: ASA7835

*Prices include discount and savings based on two passengers sharing a Grill Suite.

All-inclusive Eastern Mediterranean Silversea voyage and luxury Crete escape



SAVE UP TO
£5,400
PER COUPLE^



SILVER SPIRIT

17 Nights from £4,499^{pp+}
Departing Sept and Oct, 2023

This amazing holiday includes:

All-Inclusive Cruise

11 night all-inclusive luxury cruise on board Silver Spirit

Visiting*: Athens, Kuşadası, Bodrum, Rhodes, Antalya, Hafia (overnight in port), Ashdod, Agios Nikolaos, Santorini, Athens

Complimentary Luxury Hotel Stays

One-night five-star hotel stay at the Electra Metropolis Athens with breakfast

Five-night five-star ultra all-inclusive hotel stay in Crete at the Mitsis Laguna Resort & Spa

All Flights and Transfers

(London departure- regional flights)

SIX-STAR ALL-INCLUSIVE VOYAGE WITH COMPLIMENTARY SHORE EXCURSIONS*

PRICES FROM

VISTA SUITE	VERANDA SUITE
£4,499 ^{pp+}	£5,299 ^{pp+}
SUPERIOR VERANDA SUITE	DELUXE VERANDA SUITE
£5,699 ^{pp+}	£5,999 ^{pp+}



ONLINE CRUISE CODE: MED7656

*Offer includes one excursion per guest, per port/day. Additional excursions available at an extra charge. *Prices shown include discount and savings based on booking directly with Imagine Cruising. +Prices and itinerary based on October 12, 2023 departure.

**IMAGINE
CRUISING**
MORE THAN JUST A CRUISE.



For Imagine Cruising bookings call
0808 115 0646

thetimes.co.uk/imagine

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

TIMES Travel Offers

**14 NIGHTS
FROM
£2,699^{PP*}**

Barbados escape and intimate Royal Clipper voyage



Intimate cruise on board **Royal Clipper**

Royal Clipper elicits admiring looks wherever it goes, and its interiors are equally impressive. It provides an intimate and luxurious experience while its amenities combine modern conveniences with timeless touches. From the sumptuous setting of the library to the underwater portholes of the Captain Nemo Lounge and a crow's nest from which you can admire the views, it's a ship that provides a thrilling and memorable nautical adventure.

**COMPLIMENTARY
ALL-INCLUSIVE
HOTEL
UPGRADE***

**FURTHER REDUCTIONS:
SAVE UP TO
£2,400
PER COUPLE^**



**14 Nights
Departing Dec, 2023 - Mar, 2024**

This *amazing* holiday includes:

Full-Board Cruise

Seven-night full-board cruise on board Royal Clipper

- Enjoy a traditional sail-powered seafaring experience
- Relish a relaxed ambience with an easy-going dress code
- Intimate atmosphere with a capacity for just 227 passengers

Visiting*: Barbados, Captain's Best (Grenadines), St. George's (Grenada), Tobago Cays (Grenadines), Kingstown (St. Vincent), Admiralty Bay (Bequia), Fort-de-France (Martinique), St. Lucia, Barbados

Hotel Stay

Seven-night four-star hotel stay in Barbados at the Sugar Cane Club Hotel And Spa

*Book an Outside cabin or above and receive an all-inclusive hotel stay

All Flights and Transfers

(London departure - regional flights available)

INSIDE from*
£2,699^{PP}

OUTSIDE from*
£3,299^{PP}

SUPERIOR OUTSIDE from*
£3,799^{PP}

SUITE from*
£4,999^{PP}

SOLO PASSENGER from*
£4,399

Prices are per person based on two adults sharing a cruise cabin or suite and include flights from London (regional flights available at a supplement). *Prices and itinerary based on December 9, 2023 departure. ^Prices shown include discount and savings are based on two passengers sharing an Inside cabin departing December 9, 2023.



ONLINE CRUISE CODE: AME7539

Spend seven nights in utter bliss during a Barbados beach escape before taking an intimate cruise around the Caribbean with Royal Clipper.

Barbados, a haven of sprawling white sandy beaches, twinkling azure waters and verdant palm forests, is where your adventure begins. Savour a seven-night hotel stay and soak up Barbados' pristine views of towering palm trees that whisper in the breeze, turquoise waters and indulge in the luxuries of this beautiful island.

In Bridgetown, witness the most prestigious horse racing events at the Garrison Savannah or explore the historic sites. Admire the city's grand historic architecture or explore George Washington House, the same house and surroundings where the first U.S. president stayed on his visit to Barbados.

Following your stay, you'll settle in for an extraordinary seven-night cruise on board the magnificent Royal Clipper. On board there's every luxury you could possibly imagine, from an elegant three-tiered dining room serving gourmet dishes to a well-stocked library and a spa. Your magical voyage will include the chance to discover the beautiful islands of the Caribbean such as St Lucia, Grenada and Martinique, before you disembark back in Barbados.



Seven-night hotel stay in Barbados

Arriving in Barbados, you'll be transferred to your hotel to begin your stay on this postcard-perfect island. After a day of exploring, relax on Barbados' serene beaches, with warm inviting waves gently lapping the shore, and lofty palm trees swaying in the Caribbean breeze.

The Sugar Cane Club Hotel & Spa is enveloped in lush landscapes and views of the Caribbean Sea, and you'll discover tranquillity and intimate seclusion to help you embrace the laidback Bajan way of life.

**IMAGINE
CRUISING**
MORE THAN JUST A CRUISE.



For Imagine Cruising bookings call

0808 115 0646

thetimes.co.uk/imagine

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

TIMES Travel Offers

2023 Croatia island-hopping private yacht and magical Montenegro experience

CREATED BY
Imagine

SAVE UP TO
£1,000
PER COUPLE*

MS ROKO

Ten Nights from £1,999pp*
Departing Jun - Oct, 2023

This amazing holiday includes:

Half-Board Cruise

Seven-night half-board cruise on board MS Roko including Captains Dinner

Visiting: Dubrovnik, Slano, Korčula, Vis, Hvar, Mljet National Park, Elafiti Islands, Dubrovnik

Hotel Stay

Three-night five-star hotel stay in Montenegro at the Maestral Resort & Casino in a Sea View room with breakfast

Enjoy a 50 minute Mediterranean massage during your spa day

Escorted Tours

Korčula Marco Polo tour, Hvar City tour, Mljet National Park walking tour, Dubrovnik walking tour, Boka Bay Cruise, tour of the Old Town in Montenegro and Lovćen National Park tour

Exclusive Events

Experience Dubrovnik Dinner on the Wall
Farewell Gala Dinner at The Citadel in Budva

All Flights and Transfers

(London departure - regional flights available)

LIMITED TO ONLY 36 GUESTS PER SAILING

PRICES from	OUTSIDE PORTHOLE	OUTSIDE PICTURE WINDOW	UPPER BALCONY	UPPER PREMIUM BALCONY
JUN, 2023	£2,299pp	£2,499pp	Sold Out	Sold Out
JUL, 2023	£2,299pp	Sold Out	Sold Out	Sold Out
AUG, 2023	£2,099pp	Sold Out	£2,899pp	Sold Out
OCT, 2023	£1,999pp	Sold Out	£2,899pp	Sold Out



ONLINE CRUISE CODE: MED7558

*Price and itinerary based on October 22, 2023 departure. *Prices include discount and savings based on two passengers sharing an Upper Balcony cabin departing 15 October 2023.

Ultra all-inclusive Rhodes retreat and Mediterranean voyage

Holland America Line®
SAVOR THE JOURNEY

COMPLIMENTARY
FIVE-NIGHT LUXURY
HOTEL STAY
IN RHODES

OOSTERDAM

17 Nights from £2,299pp*
Departing Sept and Oct, 2023

This amazing holiday includes:

Full-Board Cruise

12 night full-board cruise on board Oosterdam

Visiting*: Piraeus (Athens), Dardanelles, Istanbul, Mykonos, Kotor, Naples, Civitavecchia, Livorno, Cannes, Sète, Barcelona

Complimentary Upgrade to Holland America's 'Have It All' package

- Shore Excursions, Beverage Package, Specialty Dining, Wi-Fi

Complimentary Luxury Hotel Stay

Five-night five-star ultra all-inclusive hotel stay at the Rodos Maris Resort & Spa

All Flights and Transfers

(London departure)

INCLUDES DRINKS, SPECIALITY DINING, WI-FI AND MORE

PRICES FROM*

INSIDE	OCEAN VIEW	VERANDAH	SIGNATURE SUITE
£2,299pp	£2,699pp	£3,199pp	£4,599pp



ONLINE CRUISE CODE: MED7728

Prices are per person based on two adults sharing a cruise cabin or suite and include flights from London. *Prices and itinerary based on October 15, 2023 departure.

IMAGINE CRUISING
MORE THAN JUST A CRUISE.

ABTA
ABTA No. Y6300

Trustpilot ★★★★★

For Imagine Cruising bookings call
0808 115 0646

thetimes.co.uk/imagine

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

TIMES Travel Offers

**16 NIGHTS
FROM
£1,799^{PP*}**

Princess cruises full transit Panama canal discovery



The Emerald Princess® Experience

The theme on the magnificent Emerald Princess® is definitely 'choices'. Undoubtedly a real jewel of this world-leading cruise line's fleet, the Emerald Princess® offers its passengers a wonderfully wide range of choices of itineraries, dazzling entertainment and exquisite dining experiences. Unwind within the realms of a tranquil paradise at The Sanctuary, or discover an on-board world of European charm at the Piazza.

**JUST LAUNCHED
FOR
JAN & FEB 2024**

**COMPLIMENTARY
HOTEL STAY IN
LOS ANGELES
OR MIAMI***

**16 Nights
Departing Jan & Feb, 2024**

This *amazing* holiday includes:

Full-Board Cruise

15 night full-board cruise on board Emerald Princess®

Visiting*: Fort Lauderdale, Cartagena, Panama Canal (scenic cruising), Fuerte Amador, Puntarenas, San Juan del Sur, Huatulco, Puerto Vallarta, Los Angeles

- Browse the boutiques; enjoy a chocolate spa treatment at Lotus Spa®, practice your putting at Princess Links, lie back on the sun deck or take a dip in one of the ship's pools
- Don't miss The Voice of the Ocean and Broadway-style shows at Princess Theater

Complimentary Hotel Stay

One-night four-star hotel stay at the Novotel Miami Brickell*

All Flights and Optional Transfers*
(London departure - regional flights available)

INTERIOR from
£1,799^{PP}

OCEANVIEW from
£1,999^{PP}

BALCONY from
£2,449^{PP}

MINI-SUITE from
£3,299^{PP}

*Hotel based on January 21, 2024 departure date. *Transfers are available at an additional cost. *Prices and itinerary shown are based on January 21, 2024 departure.



ONLINE CRUISE CODE: AME7696

A menagerie of cultures, vivid skies, and natural wonders await on this magical cruise holiday travelling the world-famous Panama Canal and highlighting the treasures of Central and South America.

You'll begin your unforgettable holiday in sun-kissed Miami, where you'll enjoy an overnight hotel stay exploring its golden sand beaches and palm-hugged promenades. Next, you'll join the magnificent Emerald Princess® in Fort Lauderdale for your incredible 15-night cruise to 'The City of Angels', Los Angeles.

Grand in design, the magnificent Emerald Princess® is the perfect vessel to transport you on this iconic ocean-to-ocean voyage. With a plethora of delights available on board, you'll relish abundant restaurant choices, fantastic entertainment, and plentiful opportunities for activity.

Setting sail, you'll first call to historic Cartagena, a city steeped in colonial heritage, before you'll embark on a full transit of the revered Panama Canal. A truly superior way of experiencing this colossal wonder, you'll journey through the very canal that revolutionised sea travel as we know it. As you pass through this 80-kilometer man-made marvel from Pacific to Atlantic waters, you'll be met with an abundance of lush greenery and tropical rainforests, making wonderful memories as you spot captivating wildlife species.



Explore Costa Rica

Punta Arenas in Costa Rica is one of the most ecologically diverse destinations on Earth. Discover endless tropical greenery, unspoilt scenery and wildlife galore.

Explore the volcanoes, rainforests, mountains and waterfalls of this beautiful naturally diverse country and be sure to check out the dramatic Playa Ostional, with its volcanic black sands and vibrant sea turtles. Alternatively, head into the capital, San José, to experience the delightful historic neighbourhoods

**IMAGINE
CRUISING**
MORE THAN JUST A CRUISE.



For Imagine Cruising bookings call

0808 115 0646

thetimes.co.uk/imagine

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

TIMES Travel Offers

**13 - 14 NIGHTS
FROM
£4,199^{PP}**

Luxury Silversea cruise and all-inclusive Barbados getaway

SILVERSEA

Board the *exquisite Silver Dawn*

A new world of luxury awaits aboard *Silver Dawn*. Modern yet classic, it is the natural evolution of the Silversea fleet. Large enough to offer eight dining options – including the superb Sea and Land Taste (S.A.L.T.) programme – yet small enough for the famed Silversea on-board ambience, *Silver Dawn* inherits the best features of her sister ships *Silver Muse* and *Silver Moon*, but is in a class all of her own.

**COMPLIMENTARY
FIVE-STAR ALL-INCLUSIVE
BARBADOS HOTEL STAY**

**SAVE UP TO
£2,600
PER COUPLE***

**13 - 14 Nights
Departing Nov, 2023 - Jan, 2024**

This *amazing* holiday includes:

All-Inclusive Cruise

Ten-night all-inclusive luxury cruise on board *Silver Dawn*

Visiting: Fort Lauderdale, San Juan, Philipsburg, St John's (Antigua and Barbuda), Les Saintes (Guadeloupe), Castries (Saint Lucia), Bequia (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Bridgetown (Barbados)

- Complimentary premium shore excursions included at every port*
- Pre-paid gratuities and complimentary Wi-Fi on board
- In-suite butler service and fully stocked fridge for all suites
- All-inclusive beverages including fine wines, beers and premium spirits

Hotel Stays

One-night four-star stay in Fort Lauderdale at The Atlantic Hotel & Spa or similar

Three-night five-star all-inclusive hotel stay in Barbados at the O2 Beach Club & Spa

All Flights and Transfers

(London departure - regional flights available)

VISTA SUITE FROM*

£4,199^{PP}

VERANDA SUITE FROM*

£4,699^{PP}

SUPERIOR VERANDA SUITE FROM*

£4,899^{PP}

DELUXE VERANDA SUITE FROM*

£4,999^{PP}

SILVER SUITE FROM*

£8,999^{PP}

*Offer includes one excursion per guest, per port/day and applies on board the Silver Shadow only. Additional excursions available at an extra charge. Main image is intended for illustrative purposes only. Vista and Silver Suite price based on December 10, 2023. Veranda, Superior Veranda and Deluxe Veranda Suite prices based on November 28, 2023 departure. ^Duration, itinerary and ship vary depending on departure date. Prices include discount and savings based on two passengers sharing a Vista Suite departing January 23, 2024.



ONLINE CRUISE CODE: AME7583

The chilled Caribbean lifestyle is evident in every element of this holiday. So, from exotic locations to peaceful retreats, you'll get the real essence of this tropical paradise.

Your holiday begins with an overnight hotel stay in Florida's Fort Lauderdale; the 'Yachting Capital of the World', known for its year-round sunshine. Following your stay, you'll embark the opulent *Silver Dawn*: classic yet modern, savour the famed Silversea ambience on board. Sumptuous suites, cutting-edge design, impeccable service, and state-of-the-art amenities make it her the perfect guide to escort you to the highlights of the Caribbean.

Your all-inclusive voyage first calls to Puerto Rico's vibrant capital, San Juan. Spirited and energetic, this colourful city will truly set the tone, as you sail next to St Maarten, perhaps the most intriguing and diverse island in the Caribbean. Half French and half Dutch, you'll arrive in its Dutch capital, Philipsburg, offering a delightful warren of narrow streets, shops and cafés - the perfect base from which to explore.

Other highlights of your cruise include calls to St John's, Antigua, where you'll be met by the beautiful sounds of steel drums, St George's, known as the Spice Island due to its native aromatic nutmeg, and Bequia, with its exceptional beaches you'll struggle to leave behind.

Barbados, a haven of sprawling white sandy beaches, twinkling azure waters and verdant palm forests, is where your adventure culminates with three nights at the all-inclusive luxury O2 Beach Club retreat. Enjoy total relaxation in its cabanas and reclining loungers, with attentive waiters on hand. Its clean contemporary decoration melds perfectly with the exquisite scenery of this Caribbean haven.



Five-star stay at the O2 Beach Club & Spa

Overlooking Dover Beach along the Caribbean Sea, this new upscale resort is nestled in the bustling region of Saint Lawrence Gap, just one kilometre from mangroves in the Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary. Rooms feature contemporary décor highlights with modern furnishings and boast stunning ocean views. With an all-inclusive board basis, guests can enjoy a wealth of indulgences including two adult-only pools, beach waiter service, complimentary Wi-Fi, luxury spa treatments and limitless access to a variety of gourmet dining options.

**IMAGINE
CRUISING**
MORE THAN JUST A CRUISE.



Trustpilot ★★★★★

For Imagine Cruising bookings call

0808 115 0646

thetimes.co.uk/imagine

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

TIMES Travel Offers

SEVEN NIGHTS
FROM
£2,499^{PP}

All-inclusive luxury Mediterranean cruise and Monaco Grand Prix™



The Azamara Pursuit® Experience

The launch of Azamara Pursuit® in 2018 opened the seas to maiden ports, new itineraries, and the opportunity to provide guests with even more unforgettable, unique, and immersive experiences than ever before. Like their sister ships, Azamara Pursuit® offers some of the most extraordinary adventures on Earth, to places you've always dreamed of. Or, perhaps, only just heard about.

**COMPLIMENTARY
TWO-NIGHT HOTEL
STAY IN BARCELONA**

**RACE DAY
GRANDSTAND TICKET
TO THE MONACO
GRAND PRIX™**

**Seven Nights
Departing May 21, 2024**

This *amazing* holiday includes:

All-Inclusive Cruise

Five-night all-inclusive luxury cruise on board Azamara Pursuit®
Complimentary alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages including house spirits, wine and international beers
Pre-paid gratuities and complimentary AzAmazing Evenings® event
Concierge services for personal guidance and reservations

Visiting: Barcelona, Toulon, St Tropez, Monte Carlo, Barcelona (overnight in port)

Complimentary Hotel Stay

Two-night four-star stay in Barcelona at the Hotel SB Plaza Europa with breakfast

Exclusive Event

Formula 1® Grandstand T Ticket to the Monaco Grand Prix™ on Race Day

All Flights and Transfers

(London departure - regional flights available)

CLUB INTERIOR from
£2,499^{PP}

CLUB OCEANVIEW from
£2,899^{PP}

CLUB VERANDA from
£3,499^{PP}



ONLINE CRUISE CODE: MED7637

Soak up the scintillating atmosphere of the thrilling Monaco Grand Prix™ during an all-inclusive cruise around the balmy Mediterranean following a delightful two-night hotel stay in breathtaking Barcelona.

Your charming holiday begins with a two-night hotel stay in the vibrant city of Barcelona, a world-famous creative destination famous for its striking Gothic Quarter and rich artistic heritage.

Next, you'll join the opulent Azamara Pursuit® for your five-night, all-inclusive cruise around the Mediterranean. With one staff member for every two guests, you'll experience the best personal and attentive service, making your cruise holiday to some of the world's most exciting destinations that much more special.

First, you'll take in the beauty of France's Toulon, where brightly coloured terraced houses line the waterfront. In glamorous St Tropez – a destination popular with the rich and famous – you'll delight in views of stunning azure waters before you'll arrive in Monte Carlo in perfect timing to attend Race Day at the illustrious Monaco Grand Prix™ 2024.

Considered one of the most important and prestigious races in the world, attending the Monaco Grand Prix™ is a bucket-list experience for racing superfans across the globe. This exhilarating event is sure to be a highlight of your holiday, as you feel the roar of Formula One® cars beneath your feet battling for pole position on the competition's most challenging track.

Finally, you'll relish an overnight in port in Barcelona to explore its architectural marvels, sample delicious tapas and lose yourself in the cultural hub of La Rambla.



Exclusive Event Monaco Grand Prix™

The most iconic track to grace Grand Prix™, the narrow – and impossibly glamorous – streets of Monaco pose one of the most challenging and technically complex races in the Formula One® calendar.

The circuit, which has remained almost identical since 1950, is 3,340km long and requires the utmost driving precision and skill – it's the race that every Formula One® driver dreams of winning, and every racing superfan desires to attend!

**IMAGINE
CRUISING**
MORE THAN JUST A CRUISE.



For Imagine Cruising bookings call

0808 115 0646

thetimes.co.uk/imagine

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

TIMES Travel Offers

**18 NIGHTS
FROM
£5,499^{PP}**

Cunard Alaska voyage, Rocky Mountaineer and Calgary Stampede

Board the *exquisite* Queen Elizabeth

When the late Queen Elizabeth II conducted the naming ceremony in her own honour in October 2010, she continued a marvellously regal formal cruising tradition. Cunard has maintained all the refined styling, amenities and service associated with the Golden Era of cruise sailing and added modern facilities, leisure and entertainment opportunities.

**JUST LAUNCHED
FOR JUNE 2024**

**TWO-DAY TICKET
TO THE CALGARY
STAMPEDE**

**18 Nights
Departing June 20, 2024**

This *amazing* holiday includes:

Full-Board Cruise

Ten-night full-board cruise on board Queen Elizabeth

Visiting: Vancouver, Ketchikan, Tracy Arm Fjord (scenic cruising), Juneau, Haines, Hubbard Glacier (scenic cruising), Sitka, Victoria, Vancouver,

Fully Escorted Tours

Banff National Park tour including a visit to Lake Louise

Two-day ticket to the Calgary Stampede

Rail Journey

Two-day luxury Rocky Mountaineer rail journey from Vancouver to Banff

Hotel Stays

Two-night four-star hotel stay in Vancouver at the DOUGLAS, Autograph Collection or similar

One-night four-star hotel stay in Kamloops

Two-night four-star hotel stay at the Banff Caribou Lodge & Spa or similar

Three-night four-star hotel stay at The Westin Calgary or similar

All Flights and Transfers

(London departure)

UPGRADE TO GOLDLEAF SERVICE FOR £995^{PP}

INSIDE from
£5,499^{PP}

OCEANVIEW from
£5,999^{PP}

BALCONY from
£6,499^{PP}

GRILL SUITE from
£8,499^{PP}



ONLINE CRUISE CODE: AME7584

Enjoy an unforgettable Alaskan voyage and opulent Rocky Mountaineer rail journey through the Canadian Rockies before embracing the 'Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth,' the Calgary Stampede.

Your holiday begins with a night in the breathtaking oceanfront city of Vancouver before you'll embark Cunard's regal Queen Elizabeth for your intriguing ten-night Alaskan voyage. Revel in Cunard's iconic standard of luxury, from white-gloved waiters serving Afternoon Tea, to decadent Gala Evenings.

Discover Ketchikan's Indigenous heritage, glimpse bald eagles in Juneau, and marvel at Hubbard Glacier, North America's largest glacier – gifting you awe-inspiring vistas and abundant wildlife, before disembarking in Vancouver.

In Vancouver, you'll savour a further hotel stay before embarking the astounding Rocky Mountaineer, for a luxury rail journey that glides into the heart of the Canadian Rockies. Discover stunning sights, from dramatic gorges to sparkling lakes, from the opulent surrounds of this lavish vessel's carriages and during a stop in Kamloops. Disembarking in Banff, breathe in the crisp mountain air of Banff National Park and marvel at the revered Lake Louise during a fully escorted tour and two-night stay.

Finally, you'll transfer to Calgary, for a three-night Wild West escape. Here, you'll attend the iconic Calgary Stampede, considered 'The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth', as well as relish time at leisure to explore. During your two-day experience, you'll witness a host of jaw-dropping events with lively rodeos, adrenaline-inducing bull riding and scintillating live acts, as well as sampling mouth-watering North American snacks.



Rail journey on board Rocky Mountaineer

One of the world's most extraordinary train journeys, Rocky Mountaineer delves deep into some of Canada's most awe-inspiring landscapes. On a journey through the iconic Canadian Rockies, watch in awe as emerald forests unfurl and hem in icy blue rivers that snake through dramatic gorges.

With the option to upgrade to Rocky Mountaineer's GoldLeaf service, you could experience undulating panoramas of the sublime Canadian Rockies through the train's full glass-dome windows.

**IMAGINE
CRUISING**
MORE THAN JUST A CRUISE.



Trustpilot ★★★★★

For Imagine Cruising bookings call
0808 115 0646

thetimes.co.uk/imagine

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

TIMES Travel Offers

**11 NIGHTS
FROM
£4,999^{PP}**

Luxury all-inclusive Andean rail journey and Machu Picchu tour



Embark on the Andean Explorer

South America's first luxury sleeper train weaves its way through the Peruvian Andes between the capital of the Inca Empire, Cusco and the 'White City' of Arequipa, taking in the beautiful waters of Lake Titicaca. With one-to-one staff ratios, spacious cabins, en suite bathrooms, local alpaca furnishings and a spa car to enjoy some pampering in between excursions, a journey on the Andean Explorer is a wonderful experience.

**SAVE UP TO
£1,000
PER COUPLE***

**EXTEND YOUR
HOLIDAY
ADD THREE-NIGHTS
IN RIO FROM £499^{PP}**

**11 Nights
Departing March 7, 2024**

This *amazing* holiday includes:

Luxury Rail Journey

Two-night all-inclusive luxury Belmond Andean Explorer rail journey from Cusco to Arequipa with an off-train excursion at Puno and Lake Titicaca

Fully Escorted Tours

Highlights of Lima Tour, Walking City Tour of Cusco, Sacred Valley Tour including: Salt Mines of Maras, Moray and Ollantaytambo Ruins and Machu Picchu Tour

Hotel Stays

Four-night four-star hotel stay at the Holiday Inn Lima Miraflores
Three-night four-star hotel stay at the Wyndham Costa del Sol Cusco
One-night five-star stay at the Aranwa Sacred Valley Hotel & Wellness
One-night four-star hotel stay at the Casa Andina Select Arequipa Plaza or similar
All hotel stays include breakfast

Extend Your Stay: three nights in Rio de Janeiro from £499^{PP}

Three-night four-star hotel stay in Rio de Janeiro Tour of Christ the Redeemer

All Flights and Transfers Included (London departure - regional flights available)

BUNK BED from
£4,999^{PP}

TWIN BED from
£5,699^{PP}

SUITE from
£6,499^{PP}

*Prices shown include discount and savings based on 2 passengers sharing a Bunk Bed.

Experience one of the world's highest train routes on board Belmond's Andean Explorer and encounter Machu Picchu on a phenomenal holiday taking in ancient Inca's treasures.

Your remarkable holiday begins with a three-night hotel stay in the capital of Peru, Lima. Here, you'll relish fully escorted tours of the city and visit Larco Museum - one of the world's top museums, as well as relish time at leisure to embrace this lively metropolis.

Cusco, the capital of the Inca empire, then calls for a two-night hotel stay. During your stay, you'll gain glimpses into its rich heritage and archaeological splendour with a fully escorted tour of the city's most enthralling sights, including The Cathedral, Quoricancha and Sacsayhuaman.

Next, you'll transfer to the spellbinding Sacred Valley. Here you'll discover several ancient Incan sites and marvel at awe-inspiring landscapes during a memorable tour and hotel stay, before returning to Cusco. From Cusco, you'll join a captivating tour of one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, the astounding Machu Picchu including a fascinating Expedition Train journey.

The following day you'll join Belmond's sumptuous Andean Explorer for an all-inclusive journey through the time-honored lands of Peru. Reignite the romance of luxury rail travel as the elegant Andean Explorer carves a path between Peru's ancient wonders and natural kingdoms. As you glide effortlessly through the Peruvian highlands to Arequipa, you'll travel in inimitable style relishing all-inclusive luxuries, and visiting charming Puno and the majestic Lake Titicaca along the way.

Disembarking in Arequipa, you'll enjoy an overnight hotel stay ahead of your flight to Lima for a final hotel stay.



Extend your Stay:
Add on a three-night hotel stay in Rio from only £499^{PP}

Take your unforgettable holiday to the next level with a three-night stay in the vibrant and colourful city of Rio de Janeiro and a free fully escorted tour of the iconic Christ the Redeemer. Discover the charming, narrow streets of Santa Teresa for a romantic dinner overlooking the bay, dance to samba in one of the city's exciting bars, relax on one of its famous beaches and take in the city from above from the foot of the embracing Christ the Redeemer statue.

**IMAGINE
HOLIDAYS**
MORE THAN JUST A HOLIDAY.

ABTA
ABTA No. Y6300
Trustpilot ★★★★★

For Imagine Holidays bookings call
0808 134 9526

thetimes.co.uk/imagineholidays

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

T TIMES Travel Offers

Shimla Express and India's Golden Triangle

**ESCORTED
TOURING
HOLIDAY**

12 NIGHTS
FULLY ESCORTED
TOURING HOLIDAY
PRICES FROM

£1,999

PER PERSON*



Experience the Shimla Express

Board the Kalka-Shimla Toy Train to ride along a Unesco World Heritage Site railway track. This compact train traverses a mountainous route through dense forests, offering magnificent views of the landscape.

NEW DATES ADDED FOR 2023 AND 2024

Experience the vibrant colours, sights and sounds of India during an iconic rail journey and a series of immersive tours, as you explore the gleaming Golden Triangle.

Embark the famous Kalka-Shimla Toy Train. Journey through the majestic Himalayas, through 103 tunnels and over 700 bridges as you relax in comfortable surroundings on your voyage to Shimla. Here you'll spend three nights in the city to explore its fascinating history during a sightseeing tour, and venture into the wilderness with a captivating walking trail through the Himalayas.

Next, explore India's greatest treasures during a fully escorted Golden Triangle tour. Discover the contrasts of Old and New Delhi before

travelling to Agra for the highlight of your tour: a visit to the world-famous Taj Mahal, an architectural masterpiece in white marble. Delve into the wilderness of Ranthambore National Park, where you'll enjoy close encounters with India's wildlife, comprising of tigers, leopards, jackals, sloth bears and Indian wild boar*.

Your Golden Triangle tour continues to the beautiful city of Jaipur. Admire the fairy-tale Amber Fort, see the intriguing Hawa Mahal, known as the Palace of Winds, and enjoy the view of Maota Lake.



Ranthambore National Park

Nestling at the foot of the Aravalli Hills, the Ranthambore National Park is hailed as one of India's finest wildlife locations. Journey through the captivating landscape as you keep lookout for the jungle's majestic inhabitants.

Five-Star Golden Triangle Tour

Experience the incredible sights of three of India's most popular destinations, Delhi, Agra and Jaipur.

Discover switchback alleyways and colonial relics, delve into the history of grand forts, marvel at the splendour of Rajasthan's opulent palaces, and immerse yourself in the bustle of colourful bazaars. This fascinating region is full of unforgettable sights, from the serenely beautiful Hawa Mahal to the magnificent Taj Mahal.



12 Nights | Departing Oct, 2023 – Mar, 2024

This *incredible* holiday includes:

Rail Journey

One-day rail journey from Kalka to Shimla on board the Himalayan Queen Toy Train

Fully Escorted Tours

Tour of Jama Masjid Mosque, Raj Ghat, Humayun's Tomb, Qutub Minar and more
Tour of the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri
Tour of Amber Fort, Hawa Mahal, the City Palace, Jantar Mantar Observatory and more
Trail walk through the Himalayas
Game drives through Ranthambore National Park
Shimla sightseeing city tour

Hotel Stays

Four-night five-star hotel stay in Delhi
Three-night five-star hotel stay in Shimla
One-night five-star hotel stay in Agra
Two-night five-star hotel stay in Ranthambore with breakfast, lunch and dinner
Two-night five-star hotel stay in Jaipur
All hotel stays include breakfast

All flights and transfers

Twin Share prices from

OCT, 2023 from
£2,299_{pp}

NOV, 2023 from
£2,499_{pp}

DEC, 2023 from
£2,499_{pp}

JAN, 2024 from
£1,999_{pp}

MAR, 2024 from
£2,599_{pp}

*Price based on January, 2024 departure. *Wildlife sightings are not guaranteed. Tour may operate in reverse direction for certain departure dates.

**IMAGINE
HOLIDAYS**
MORE THAN JUST A HOLIDAY.

ABTA
ABTA No. Y6300
Trustpilot ★★★★★

For Imagine Holidays bookings call
0808 134 9526

thetimes.co.uk/imagineholidays

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

T TIMES Travel Offers

**NINE NIGHTS
FROM
£4,799^{PP}**

Australia coast-to-coast: all-inclusive Indian Pacific rail



Explore Sydney

Experience one of the few truly transcontinental rail journeys in the world with a voyage on board the Indian Pacific service, which travels across the breadth of southern Australia in incomparable style. Part of Journey Beyond Rail Expeditions, the Indian Pacific speeds from coast to coast on a storied journey that follows in the footsteps of bush pioneers, gold rush greed, and famous adventurers who forged to discover the barren natural beauty of Australia's famously unforgiving outback.

**LIMITED
AVAILABILITY**

**EXCLUSIVE
TO IMAGINE
HOLIDAYS**

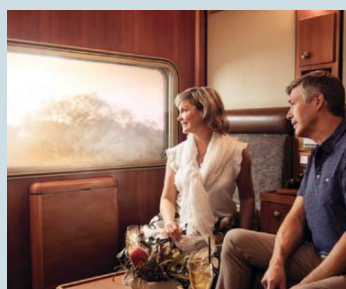


Experience laidback Perth, embrace Australia's famous Outback on board the remarkable Indian Pacific, and relish a mesmerising Blue Mountains tour during a delightful four-night Sydney escape.

Your holiday begins with a two-night stay in cosmopolitan Perth, home to a combination of sophisticated attractions, cultural landmarks, stunning beaches, and a relaxed atmosphere.

Next, you'll join the illustrious Indian Pacific on a luxurious coast-to-coast rail journey to Sydney, embracing Australia's beautifully isolated Outback in all its wildly unique beauty. With no better way to see an all-encompassing view of Australia than by rail, unwind on board as unforgettable vistas evolve before you. Relish decadent fine dining and enjoy captivating, all-inclusive Off Train Experiences as you glide across the expanse of Australia in inimitable style, evocative of the golden era of travel. From the endless flats of the Nullarbor Plain to the rugged charm of the Blue Mountains, it's a journey assured to leave you inspired.

Arriving in the harbour city of Sydney, you'll conclude your holiday with a four-night hotel stay. Nicknamed the Emerald City, here, you'll have a fantastic opportunity to explore this iconic, dynamic city at your own pace. Discover sun-soaked, golden beaches, seek out its world-famous attractions, and delve into Sydney's phenomenal food and drink scene. You'll also enjoy a fully escorted tour of the magnificent Blue Mountains and Three Sisters rock formation – two natural wonders a trip to Sydney is not complete without.



Luxury Rail Journey Indian Pacific

You'll enjoy an Outback adventure on board the mighty Indian Pacific, exploring Australia's entire breadth along the world's longest stretch of straight railway.

You'll discover cosmopolitan cities and remote destinations and savour a disconnect from the bustle of life while enjoying all-inclusive dining and drinks on board. You'll also appreciate an array of Off Train Experiences, allowing you to explore other enthralling destinations along your way to Sydney.

Nine Nights Departing February 9, 2024

This *amazing* holiday includes:

All-Inclusive Rail Journey

Three-night all-inclusive **Gold Service** rail journey on board the Indian Pacific from Perth to Sydney

All-inclusive Off Train Experiences and short stops in Cook, Broken Hill and Adelaide

- On average, the train comprises some 30 different carriages, including guest cabins, crew quarters, restaurant cars, lounges and power vans.
- The accommodation on board is extremely luxurious, with different levels of opulence depending on what you desire from your escape.
- Your dining options depend on the level of service you have opted for, but all meals take place in the beautifully appointed Queen Adelaide restaurant car or the Platinum Club

Hotel Stays

Two-night four-star hotel stay at the Ibis Styles East Perth

Four-night four-star hotel stay in Sydney at the Holiday Inn Darling Harbour

All hotel stays include breakfast

All Flights and Transfers

(London departure - regional flights available)

TWIN SHARE *from*
£4,799^{PP}

SOLO PASSENGER *from*
£5,599

**IMAGINE
HOLIDAYS**
MORE THAN JUST A HOLIDAY.

ABTA
ABTA No. Y6300

Trustpilot ★★★★★

For Imagine Holidays bookings call

0808 134 9526

thetimes.co.uk/imagineholidays

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

T TIMES Travel Offers

**14 NIGHTS
FROM
£3,299^{PP*}**

All-inclusive Cambodia and Vietnam Mekong river cruise



Cruise on board Mekong Navigator

Step into a bygone era of charming and nostalgic sophistication enhanced by luxurious modern amenities on board Lotus' luxurious Mekong Navigator. On board you'll find an expansive sun deck, atmospheric dining room and a lounge area complete with a bar, library, internet lounge and fitness centre with a spa. Luxuriate on board as this phenomenal vessel transports you downstream whilst your every need is taken care of.



**ADDITIONAL DATES
JUST LAUNCHED
FOR 2024 & 2025**

14 Nights

Departing Jan, 2024 - Apr, 2025

This *amazing* holiday includes:

Luxury Hotel Stays

Three-night five-star hotel stay in Phan Thiet at the Anantara Mui Ne Resort
Two-night five-star stay in Ho Chi Minh City at the Grand Hotel Saigon
Two-night five-star hotel stay in Siem Reap at the Borei Angkor Resort & Spa
All hotel stays include breakfast

All-Inclusive Cruise

Seven-night all-inclusive river cruise on board Mekong Navigator

Visiting: Mỹ Tho, Cái Bè, Sa Đéc, Mỹ An Hưng A, Long Khánh Island, Phnom Penh, Angkor Ban, Wat Hanchey, Siem Reap

Fully Escorted Tours

Củ Chi Tunnels
Angkor Wat

All Flights & Transfers

(London departure)

PRICES from	SUPERIOR SUITE	VISTA SUITE	SIGNATURE SUITE	PRESTIGE SUITE	GRANDE SUITE
JAN, 2024	£3,299 ^{PP}	£3,799 ^{PP}	£4,599 ^{PP}	£5,199 ^{PP}	£5,799 ^{PP}
MAR, 2024	£3,699 ^{PP}	Sold Out	£4,499 ^{PP}	Sold Out	Sold Out
APR, 2024	£3,699 ^{PP}	£4,099 ^{PP}	£4,499 ^{PP}	£5,199 ^{PP}	£5,699 ^{PP}
OCT, 2024	£3,699 ^{PP}	Sold Out	£4,299 ^{PP}	£4,899 ^{PP}	£5,499 ^{PP}
NOV, 2024	Sold Out	£4,199 ^{PP}	£4,599 ^{PP}	£5,099 ^{PP}	£5,599 ^{PP}
JAN, 2025	£3,999 ^{PP}	£4,399 ^{PP}	£4,599 ^{PP}	£5,399 ^{PP}	£5,999 ^{PP}
FEB, 2025	£3,799 ^{PP}	£4,199 ^{PP}	£4,599 ^{PP}	Sold Out	Sold Out
MAR, 2025	£3,799 ^{PP}	£4,199 ^{PP}	£4,599 ^{PP}	£5,099 ^{PP}	£5,899 ^{PP}
APR, 2025	£3,799 ^{PP}	£4,199 ^{PP}	£4,599 ^{PP}	£5,099 ^{PP}	£5,899 ^{PP}

*Price based on January 2024 departure. Itinerary based on March, 2024 departure. Itinerary may operate in reverse depending on departure date.

Delve into southeast Asia's wonders with a series of discovery tours, a mystical Mekong River cruise and a sumptuous beachfront haven stay.

Your epic adventure begins in charming Phan Thiết, where you'll delight in a phenomenal three-night hotel escape, enjoying exceptional beachfront views. A two-night hotel stay in Ho Chi Minh City awaits, complete with a fully escorted tour of the captivating and complex Củ Chi Tunnels – a labyrinthian must-see sight for history enthusiasts.

Next, you'll savour an all-inclusive cruise along the Mekong River on board Lotus' charming Mekong Navigator. On board, you'll encounter welcoming staff, opulent accommodations, as well as a Cambodian-themed dinner in the evening.

Perhaps the world's most fascinating river cruise, this lavish journey will capture your imagination, transporting you to a world of ancient temples and pagodas, Buddhist monasteries, and busy port towns. You'll sail first to Cái Bè, uncovering waterways lined with lush greenery, before calls at vibrant Mỹ An Hưng A and charming Long Khánh Island await.

Discover vibrant Cambodia with an overnight in port in Phnom Penh – visiting shining Buddhist memorials and captivating museums that tell of the country's tragic history – before uncovering golden-hued architecture in Angkor Ban.

Bid a fond farewell to Mekong Navigator in Siem Reap, where you'll conclude your holiday with a luxury two-night stay and an enthralling tour of the temple-rich Angkor Wat.

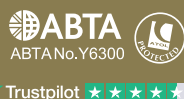


Enjoy a luxury beach stay

At the Anantara Mui Ne Resort you'll experience the ultimate getaway in the realms of pure tropical bliss. Here your stay will embrace seaside elegance and Vietnamese charm, making for the perfect start to your holiday.

The beachfront infinity pool is the perfect place to spend lazy days, or if you're looking to be more active, there are cookery classes and yoga on the beach, as well as windsurfing, sailing and snorkelling.

**IMAGINE
HOLIDAYS**
MORE THAN JUST A HOLIDAY.



For Imagine Holidays bookings call

0808 134 9526

thetimes.co.uk/imagineholidays

Opening Hours: Mon to Sun: 9am to 8pm

T TIMES Travel Offers